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Med

Indians







I'll let the man who wrote this
book was a woman

Phelan 32.

ERLESMERE:

OR,

CONTRASTS OF CHARACTER.

By L. S. LAVENU.

"O little booke, thou art so unconning,
How darst thou put thyself in prees, for drede?"

A NEW EDITION.

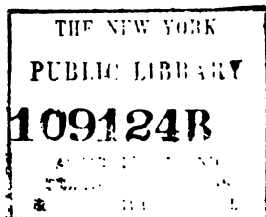


LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

M.DCCC.LXII.

66



F

TO
MY MOTHER AND GODMOTHER.

AS THOSE WHO DWELL BY STILL WATERS
PICTURE TO THEMSELVES STORMS,
THAT THEY MAY THE BETTER APPRECIATE THEIR OWN
HAPPINESS ;
SO I, WHO LIVED IN THE CALM SHELTER OF YOUR AFFECTION,
HAVE PORTRAYED IN THIS BOOK
SUCH STORMS OF LIFE
AS WERE UNKNOWN IN MY HOME-ATMOSPHERE :
THEREFORE TO YOU,
WHO MADE EXISTENCE WHAT IT WAS TO ME,
I Dedicate
THIS STORY OF A DARKER LIFE.





ERLESMERE.

CHAPTER I.

“ ‘Represent to yourself the mind of man, how it must be overrun with prejudices and errors, and how difficult a task it must be to extirpate them. And yet this work, no less difficult than glorious, is the employment of the modern freethinkers.’

“ Alciphron having said this, made a pause and looked round on the company.

“ ‘Truly,’ said I; ‘a very laudable undertaking.’ ”—BERKELEY.

“DRIVE hard, Nat, don’t spare the horses. My master gave particular orders that we should do the ten miles home in fifty minutes.” So speaking, Mr. Erle’s head-groom sprang up behind Sir Fitzroy Herrode’s light barouche. The postilion touched the off horse, and the equipage plunged into the steam of a sunny December morning. A group of gossiping ostlers, and a bewildered landlord, stood at the inn door where Sir Fitzroy Herrode had changed horses, and commented on his appearance. Sir Fitzroy Herrode was a great London doctor, who had come post from London to attend Mrs. Erle, of Erlesmere, in her confinement. The landlord’s wife presently loomed, in a morning costume too negligent to meet a traveller’s criticism.

“Is your lady very bad, that Mr. Erle should send Mr. Benson to hurry the doctor?” She spoke to the stable-boy, who waited to take back the horses which his superior had used in coming.

“Couldn’t be worse, ma’am. Master came down to the stables himself at six o’clock this morning, and gave his orders most particular to us. I never seed one so pale and scared-like.”

“And the child?”

"Children, missis—two young gentlemen—one as fine a boy as can be, they say. The other, indeed——"

"Well!" said she, for the helper paused.

"It's not my business; and I know nothing for certain. But I must be jogging home." He rode away, whistling through the semi-opaque air. It glittered as the horses passed through it, as if it were rainbow-dust in motion.

"That's a likely chap," said the landlord, drawing a long breath. But no interest, that I know of, attaches to mine host of the little Holmvale inn, or his wife. Pass we on to Erlesmere. Its woods were too gloomy to be beautiful, as was also the old house, with its grey-green walls. Its architecture was of older date than the Elizabethan period of quaint fancies. There was much contrary to modern taste in the long high front, thick-set with small windows; and the tall pale roof, with sentinel chimneys at each gable. But the arch-artist, Nature, had not let centuries pass idly. The western wall was clad with ivy, through which a *boursault* rose here and there reared its blossom aspiringly; blushing at first, then paling in the sun's glare, as many a human rose does; before long, scattering its wan leaves on the moist soil below, to be trodden in by the next seeker for a choicer blossom. The Erlesmere soil was always moist. Close to the house-walls, at either side, grew dark ilexes, large as forest trees, and long-armed laurels, hindering undergrowth, except of moss;—moss that climbed their black oozing branches, and grew upon the terrace balustrade, and filled up with its bright velvet the seams of the area wall and the crevices of the lower window-sills. From time to time, masons dislodged it; but each autumn it appeared again, as if the stones were alive and produced it of themselves. At the rear of the house, feminine taste and a southern aspect had somewhat softened the sternness of old age. Ponds, which had served half as moats, half as fish-stews, had been drained, and were now formed into terraces and garden-plots arranged in the Italian manner. But the moss grew on Faun and Nymph, and the imitation of a Roman villa was a burlesque. Nor could weekly mowings give evenness to the sward of the dusky pleasance: the grass grew too rankly, or not at all. No wild flowers had place among its tangles, except some tall dandelions

on livid stalks. All growth of trees and shrubs was large, not beautiful: few blossoms hallowed their coarse leaves and ungainly branches. Not every one, however, would have felt these uglinesses of detail. Erlesmere was a show place of the shire. Strangers came to wonder at its avenue of chestnuts—a mile in length, and as old as any in England; and to drive through the broad woods was pleasant on a June day, when pleasure parties lighted up the eerie black mere in the forest heart, round which the trees grew straight and close and high, as in a New World swamp. On the whole, perhaps, there was much to admire at Erlesmere—with respect, however, rather than love. As if the frost, too, partook of the sombre tinge which prevailed, it was less hoar on this moated grange. The ice on the wood-pond was as dark as its still waters; and the glutinous soil of the woods, rich with centuries of rotting vegetation, grew blacker from contrast, when the tree-tops sparkled with rime.

Sir Fitzroy Herrode looked up from the review he had been reading, as the barouche rushed through the park gates. The lodge-keeper raised his hands with a sorrowful gesture easily understood. The postboy slackened his pace, unchecked by Benson; and Sir Fitzroy Herrode hastily glanced at his watch. He could not have been quicker. Forty miles in three hours and forty minutes was perfectly satisfactory. Wearied by the monotonous drip of the chestnut trees at either hand, he resumed the “slashing article” he had laid down. The doorsteps and the gravel in the courtyard lay almost black in the shadow of the house. Not an insect ventured within its sharp lines; they kept away in the sunshine that fell beyond. Over all hung silence;—the wheels even were noiseless on the thick littering of straw on the roads within ear-shot of the death-room.

Notwithstanding the Doctor’s approach, the door remained unopened. Hope was over. Sir Fitzroy Herrode had become a man as other men. Azrael had already conquered. The tardy help was a pain. “I may ring the bell now,” muttered Benson as he alighted. It was answered leisurely.

“Am I too late?” the Doctor asked of the footman when he came.

"All was over half-an-hour ago, Sir. Mr. Erle directed that you should be shown into the breakfast room."

"Very well. Post-boys, feed your horses at once. Be at the door in twenty-five minutes." With his decided step, which had somewhat of business and remorseless purpose in its expression (there is expression in every action), Sir Fitzroy Herrode passed through the echoing oak hall to the breakfast room. He found there a young man; pale and spare, with bright expressive eyes that hindered observation of his other features; except, perhaps, his mouth: it was seldom in repose, though he not often spoke. The Doctor mistook him for the parish curate, for he was dressed in black and had a student air.

"My cousin, Mr. Erle, has asked me to apologise, Sir Fitzroy Herrode, for his unavoidable seclusion. Except to entrust me with this message he has seen no one." His tone was unmistakeably that of a gentleman. The Doctor assumed a more courteous manner, and looked narrowly at him.

Stephen Harley was young, but not youthful in appearance. His figure was slight and well knit; his eye was full and brilliant; yet its glance was prematurely haughty and keen. His hair was thin and shadowy. A servant brought breakfast. "Will you not eat?" asked Mr. Harley; "my cousin trusts you will rest. A fruitless journey is always a fatiguing one."

"I thank you. I have a consultation in town at two o'clock," replied Sir Fitzroy Herrode, drily. The tone of the speaker seemed to him unceremonious to so great a man as he was.

"It was unfortunate that Mr. Erle's letter was not sent to me by an earlier post," he continued, after a pause.

"I fear additional medical aid would have been unavailing, though it might have satisfied her husband."

"Indeed! may I ask who were in attendance?"

"The parish doctor. In the last stages of her fever, I added all the knowledge I possessed to his."

"Have I then the honour, Sir, of addressing a physician?"

"A student only, by name Stephen Harley," he replied nonchalantly.

"The poor woman has evidently been sacrificed," muttered Sir Fitzroy Herrode with indignant pity; for the *young man's cool manner* angered him.

"Might I ask you to ring the bell," he added, rising to button his overcoat. "I must lose no time. Really a morning's absence brings afterwards such a press of business——!"

"Business!" said Stephen Harley bitterly, as the door closed on the bustling doctor. "To save life or to destroy it, equally a business, pursued for money with little thought of the differing ends. I'm glad this business-monger did not follow his trade here." He turned to the window impatiently and looked out. The sight of the gardens and the swelling woods, and, beyond, the blue line of hills gleaming through the sunny mist with the soft indistinctness of a pictured dreamland, seemed to give him no content. "Medical knowledge—all the knowledges," he thought murmuringly, "all 'businesses,' and those fine sounding ones the worst; for, like the ass in the fable, they wear the lion's skin. Who thinks of meanings? All, or nearly all, the learning of men is spent in measuring appearances. Children! to look at pictures, and neglect the reality!" His thoughts were very legible: in a measure they indicated his character. Scorn and dreamer; yet not of the baser sort. He scorned the society which did not fulfil his visions—which did not dream with him: but his thoughts were not always baseless fancies. Often through the mists of human imperfection he caught gleams of heaven. He did not love the earth, only because it reflected so ill the sun: his was the contempt of an enthusiast, but not of a sceptic. The "young philosopher," his well-wishers called him; the "young fool," another and a larger class. It may be, both were right. Remember the difference, however, reader, between a philosophizing fool, and a foolish philosopher; Stephen Harley was not the first, and if his neighbours ranked him among the last, he was one of an honourable company. The early death of his cousin, Mrs. Erle, did not reconcile him to the world of forms. She had from his childhood sympathised in his day dreams: now he was alone, and he sighed to think that he had not been set free with her from the "prison-house of sense." He was young to quarrel with the restrictions mortality imposes, for he was but twenty, notwithstanding his dark circled eyes. But Stephen had, from his youth up, looked *out through the chinks and crevices of our nature at the*

beyond, and the prison bars were blackly defined against the light outside. He too often flung himself against them in bitter repining: therefore, his worn features and weary look. His position at Erlesmere was anomalous. He and his cousin had been brought up by Mr. Erle, their kinsman of an older generation, who had educated them, but not in common fashion. Left much to themselves, they learned quaint notions long since out of date; quaint truths, perhaps equally obsolete, or if not, unrecognizably attired in Elizabethan starched ruffs, in the mystic robe of alchemy, or the flowing habit of scholasticism. The antique library at Erlesmere supplied such lore. The children rifled its treasures at will. Still quainter fancies, still stranger truths grew in their minds, unplanted there; but of a dark and sombre tint, as suited the locale. Beliefs that find no place in modern creeds took root: earliest, a form of polytheism. They ascribed human feelings and modes to trees and plants: they felt childish awe when the tall ash groaned and shrieked to the blast—when the alders fell a-quivering in the unfelt summer breeze. Experience-convictions soon satisfied Mary Harley. She sought with them to content her fellow-orphan Stephen. "It is the wind," she said, when a whisper came up the woodland.

"But what is the wind?" he would ask. "Why does the stream make that curious noise? Why does it hurry down the hill?"

"I cannot tell you, Steenie," she answered often to such questions, so thoughtfully that he forebore to ask her more, though his heart beat with anxiety to know. Facts seemed more and more truths to her, as womanhood advanced. Her mind was weak on wing, as was fitting for a woman; and sank to earth, where she made herself a nest. Stephen, the young eaglet, flew up against the sun, straining to rise to the highest, though blinded by the light, and not seldom beating his wings uselessly in the unsupporting æther.

"Where was kinsman Erle, the guardian of these wood-babes?" the reader, on the watch for improbabilities, inquires with a Fadladeen air. "Why did he not engage a governess for Miss Mary, and send infant phenomenon of a Stephen to school?" Kinsman Erle was but five-and-twenty when he undertook his guardianship, A.D. 1801; the first year of this nineteenth century, which was born

with such convulsed faiths and so grievous a moral taint. Education was to be reduced to system, for a rage for systematizing was general. The epidemic seized all classes. It was natural that education topics should interest society in those days of national childhood—second childhood of half the world—in its dotage misunderstanding the birth of the other half. Various methods were advocated. Admirers of Rousseau thought nature should develop the man from the boy as she would. Solomon's plan was out of fashion. Mr. Erle, whose essays on the subject were much admired, preferred the opinion of Jean Jacques, with sufficient modifications, however, to suit English prejudice. Mary and Stephen Harley were to be children of nature. But neither of Mr. Erle's wards were quite what he anticipated at the respective ages of eighteen and twelve. When Mary had attained the former, he thought it would be well, for the verification of his system, to add some teachings of his own to those of the woods and fields. It was too soon to interfere with Stephen, his guardian said. The boy was not ductile as his sister; and, child as he was, he had once or twice in conversation strangely discomposed some of Mr. Erle's most cherished axioms. Three weeks, devoted to Mary's instruction in sentimental philosophy and "natural religion," passed so pleasantly, that Mr. Erle determined, though the London season was culminating, to spend three more in wandering with her through the cool woodlands. He brought his smattering of botany and entomology into play, as they sank luxuriously on the moss cushions piled round some old oak, and watched the dragon-flies flashing through the sunlight rain that fell between the branches.

CHAPTER II.

"I see the fountains purged, whence life derives
A clear or turbid flow; see the young mind,
Not fed impure by chance, by flattery fooled,
Or by scholastic jargon bloated proud,
But filled and nourished by the light of truth."—THOMSON.

"Oh! glorious Nature! worthy art thou of worship—worthy of love!" used Mr. Erle to exclaim theatrically;

and Mary listened and admired. She listened and admired yet more, with childish and innocent vanity, when her preceptor one day inserted in his hymn of praise her name, *vice* Nature's. Except to gratify his own ears, he need not have expended eloquence on the country-bred girl. His manners, attitudes, and fine words had begot in her much worship. He duly be-thou'ed and be-thee'ed her, as he besought her not to reject him: and not knowing more of love than that lovers used those pronouns in books, she readily agreed to his wishes. Kinsman Erle was so great a man, so learned, so wonderful, that she put her hand in his with a flush of gratitude and promised to be his wife. "Soon, my child?" he whispered. So childish was she that she received his words as an intimation, and did not reply. He liked her silence: it befitted her *rôle* of artlessness. He liked his own position, for he had enacted a romance, and carried out his principles. His London friends would appreciate the fact that he had married penniless cousin: 'twas a novel in real life. His system would be universally admired when he introduced to the world the blushing child of nature as his bride. He pressed her to his heart as he thought of his disinterestedness, and she wondered at his great kindness. They sauntered home together, too thoughtful to speak. "It seemed as if you were never coming home, Mary—where have you been all day?" asked Stephen, when she returned.

"Sitting by the great oak," she replied; but not with her common frankness.

"All day?"

"Not all day, Steenie—only since noon."

"It's six o'clock now. I've been wanting to tell you that I've found a book in the library which explains everything about the stars. It's French, and I want you to help me with some of the words. Mr. Erle has been teaching you these six weeks. I wish he would go back to London. I don't like him at all," he added, vehemently. "I don't believe he knows half as much as he pretends."

"You must not say these kind of things any more, Stephen." She was going to tell him all, but the fact of her approaching marriage seemed suddenly unspeakable. Her future, which had appeared a happy dream under the blue sky, was an anxiety in the gloomy library.

"What's the matter, Mary?" Stephen suddenly exclaimed; for a blush rose even to her ears, and her lip quivered.

"Steenie, we must be very grateful (they had grown together as brother and sister). He has asked me to be his wife." He stood for a moment incredulous—then burst into petulant weeping.

"Steenie, dear Steenie, why should you be unhappy?" Mary said. "He is a great and a good man."

"Neither great nor good," he exclaimed; "and he will take you from me."

"Never," she replied earnestly, in her ignorance of life. "You are to go with me to London. We shall see all that is beautiful there; we shall learn more than we could here." He listened to her more quietly, for he believed in London as the storehouse of all he thirsted to know. Learning was his passion.

In rather less than a fortnight Mr. Erle's romance was completed. He carried out its details accurately; and even during the six after-years of his married life, he played his part of virtuous sentimentalist to perfection. With him Mary led a happy life. To her death she believed in her husband's perfections. A thorough woman, she did not mark his egotism. He had the gift *de se faire valoir*, and her trusting heart, dazzled by his grandiloquent morality, could entertain no doubts of its sterling value. Nor was he false, except to himself. His errors were gross: but he was true to them. In a moment of brimming philanthropy, his consent that Stephen should accompany them to London was gained by Mary. There the unrestrained learning-fanatic floundered in museums and libraries to his heart's content. Mr. Erle as a *savant* procured him access to them. Of other London acquirements he gained few: day by day he grew more and more a Dreamer—more a Scornor. For some time Mr. Erle sought to train him in the way he should go, according to Rousseau. The attempt was fruitless: Stephen had learnt too many lessons from his true nature, to worship the formal image thereof set up by Deists. Nor did he fail to perceive the shallow assumption which characterized his guardian's school of thought. For Mary's sake, however, he was respectful to her husband, and attentive to his

wishes. Besides, a certain indifference to externals prevented his opposing, in action, those with whom he lived. He dwelt in a purely ideal world, and the cares and desires of existence were little felt by him. Subjects, engrossing the thoughts of most men, seemed to him frivolous. He was content if he but possessed free thought; and, conscious that that was secured to him, he acquiesced readily in all Mr. Erle proposed. For money, he was entirely dependent on his guardian. The reader has heard Stephen speak some of his raw thoughts. It is scarcely necessary to say, that they were not the result of public school or college education. Yet, if they were raw, 'twas better than that they were hardened. Mr. Erle proposed that he should enter a profession; but, on reflection, few were open to the "child of Nature." The Church?—"But the clergy were enslavers of mankind," said Mr. Erle. Army and Navy?—"Soldiers and sailors were automaton murderers." Law?—Stephen would not study a "mass of obsolete prejudices; and the means of avoiding them."

"Then, Stephen, what do you say to the noble art of medicine?" (Mr. Erle, even in private life, used fine language, and a platform demeanour). "Or would you follow my example, and be a moral doctor of mankind?" Stephen answered indifferently that he should like to study analytic chemistry. He conceived that "a better knowledge of elemental proportions might conduce most to moral and physical improvement."

"The best object you can have," said his cousin doubtfully, for he did not see what the elements had to do with morals. "Yes," he added quickly; he was fond of repeating the words: "The benefit of mankind is the noblest end of life."

"Pardon me," said Stephen, dogmatically, for he was young; "I think the discovery of latent truths and hitherto undiscerned agents, is a higher aim. We may best be 'true to others, in our truth to self.'"

"Well, well, my dear boy, we mean the same, I doubt not; but your fancies are crude: however, that is natural at your age." Stephen let the criticism pass unheeded. It was only for some world-wide folly that he would leave his calm. So it was tacitly agreed that Stephen should be a philosopher (if he could), and an amateur chemist.

Partly for Mary's sake—partly because he felt responsible for the boy's unfitness to grapple with social disabilities, Mr. Erle asked him kindly to consider Erlesmere his home for the future, as it had hitherto been. There Stephen studied and experimented with the earnestness of a mediæval alchemist; and so he gained the look of thoughtful age; and his eyes gleamed as if he had caught from his crucibles a spark of that elemental fire of which he eloquently talked to Mary. She listened to him patiently (was she not a true woman?) as he discoursed to her of mysterious affinities, and prophesied of future conquests over our material disadvantages. And at other times to her husband, while he rehearsed the conclusions of the *ideologues* with whom he had in his youth associated, and proved with benign complacency that the soul was material. She listened, but her thoughts wandered to her children—two had been given to her for a brief space. Her mother's heart refused to receive Mr. Erle's belief. Each child-loss brought with it firmer faith in Him, who alone of Gods loved children; and drew her on to Heaven, quickened by memories of hers. "Stephen," she said earnestly to her brother one day, when he had spoken with peculiar eloquence of the intelligence hieroglyphed by form: "Stephen, I know not the interpretation of the hieroglyphics; but I feel that there is a future. I think I shall soon know more. If I should die early——"

"Die, Mary!" exclaimed Stephen, who felt eternal in his youthful strength; "why should you die? There is nothing the matter." He looked at her with sudden anxiety.

"Why should I not? is a question more to the point; but listen to me, Steenie. If I should die early, leaving children, will you teach them of this future? Stephen, you believe? I know you do," she added, after a pause. He did not reply; but he turned and looked out over the landscape. The sun was dimly shining through the skirts of a snow shower, with a lurid yellow light. Gradually the cloud-curtain was furled; a broad plain glittered in the setting rays. One by one the passionless stars shone out. "Mary, I believe. I believe in the spirit that pervades this universe, as soul does body; ordering its phenomena. Moral—because error is disorder, I believe——"

"Stay, Stephen, it is enough. Teach even thus much, and you will have my gratitude. It is the first step—something gained. Will you promise?"

"I will," he said earnestly; "but we will teach together, Mary." She smiled, and changed the subject. Within a fortnight Sir Fitzroy Herrode arrived from London, as has been told, and found her dead —

CHAPTER III.

"And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love in Love's own place."

MRS. BROWNING.

SIR FITZROY HERRODE was gone, and silence again filled to oppression the always gloomy sitting-rooms at Erlesmere. Stephen Harley took up a favourite book, but he had scarcely read a page, when he absently replaced it on the table. He went to his laboratory—the materials of an uncompleted experiment lay about; his miniature furnace was cold: he fingered the chemical paraphernalia wearily. He was not what is commonly called sorrowful: he lived too much in the world of his own thoughts to grieve exceedingly for a soul withdrawn from sight. Mary yet existed and was happy, he doubted not; she was as real as before, though he no longer beheld her. So to himself he theorized. Yet he could not but feel that the past fortnight had been to him one of those epochs which occur in men's lives, when the tenor of them is reversed; when thoughts are read backward, and with confused mind and weakened energies we lie prostrate till time rearranges the new state, and our altered selves grow familiar to us. For there is a difference between *ourselves* and *us*; ourselves which can so often be renewed; our inner being which is eternally the same. So Stephen felt a weight on him that he could not cast off; a temporary feebleness of will, and of his mental power. His sorrow fell on him in this way. He felt not much personal loss, for it was his first grief, and he could not gauge it by experience. It was perhaps all the more painful, because undefined. He

chanced to look towards the window. A bird, frozen dead, during the night, lay on the sill. He took it in his hands, and looked at it with curiosity. Not a sportsman, death was unfamiliar to him. The all-pervasive life was his study, and he had accustomed himself to think of the death of men with little more awe than of the chrysalis transformations in the insect world. But the dead bird took his attention painfully. A chord vibrated in his heart that silenced reason when he looked at the convulsed feet, the ruffled wing, the drooping head, and open, filmed eyes of the robin. He rose quickly, and with hasty steps he passed to the room where lay the empty form of his cousin. She was already prepared for the grave. Her calm beauty wore the severe expression with which we invest our idea of a condemning angel; the expression which accompanies tranquil death. Perhaps its stern monition is the reason wherefore it is good to be in the house of mourning. The image before him was not what he expected to see. It was not the mere husk of the human chrysalis: though life had fled, there was a presence of death. The form, though passionless, seemed tenanted. Stephen perceived a mystery; for mixed with the look of spirit-peace, was that of mortal punishment: on Mary's countenance was the Adam-brand: it was sad, though calm. New thoughts crowded on him. Why is death? what is death? From that time a new direction was given to his studies. He turned from experimental chemistry, and devoted himself to psychology. Partly from temperament, partly from the circumstances of his youth, the tenets of the Mystic school attracted him. He grew daily more a dreamer, daily more estranged from men. When by chance he thought of them, he scorned daily more and more the down-gazers, who, for the most part, people these civilized countries of Europe. Long and earnestly he looked at the still features. Oh, so well known, even in their severity; so dearly loved!

And she was gone. He knew now how irretrievably; for he felt that death, not Mary, looked at him from that calm form. His chamber reasonings that her soul was immortal seemed now valueless. Reunion was a vague possibility; but what did he know of its conditions? Would the soul preserve its unity, or be absorbed into the *Kosmos*? The cold at his heart was insupportable; and,

as all men do when touched by the icy finger of the angel to whom it is given to punish—he prayed: not kneeling to the human Christ, but standing at the open window in wrestle with the Universal Spirit. Was his prayer accepted? We know not: but he remained comfortless. He stood long there, not thinking much, but mechanically watching the drip from the icicles. His guardian's voice disturbed him. "Oh, Mary! oh, my wife! best of women, my life will be one long mourning for thee!" The words, so like a translation from Marmontel, disturbed not merely his attention, but his tone of being. The numbing cold at his heart was removed by a sharp momentary anguish. He was again the scorner of all pretences, of common men, and of their common pursuits. "‘D'une voix entrecoupée,’" he muttered to himself. "Yes, I have seen the description somewhere. He moved slightly, that Mr. Erle might not think himself alone.

"You here, Stephen!" exclaimed Mr. Erle, but with no reserve. "Companion of Mary, mourn with me! She was the tenderest of friends." Mr. Erle was sincere; but Stephen could not endure his theatrical points and gestures, as he tore his grief to tatters and strewed the unworthy fragments over that image tenanted by Azrael. He left the room. At the door he met two nurses carrying the twin orphans. Foremost came a thin puling infant; the second, healthily sleeping, was in strong contrast. "'Tis a sad sight for their innocent eyes," said the head woman. "But Mr. Erle insisted on their being brought."

"Is yours the eldest?" Stephen asked.

"Yes, sir," she replied reluctantly. "By half an hour." He hastened on, that he might not be present at the scene that followed. A tender one, it might have been; but at that moment it would have seemed to Stephen a stage-trick.

That afternoon, and the four succeeding days, he spent in striving to unravel the mystery of life in death—days of nearly unbroken solitude; for except to attend to the funeral details committed by Mr. Erle to his management, he did not see his kinsman until Mary was buried. Time is quick in healing, or, at least, concealing its own ravages; and Stephen bore his guardian's embrace, at the conclusion of the "pompe funèbre," with his former indifference: *indifference*, not because he was heartless, but because to

him external manifestations seemed of secondary importance. Through the dark woods, though a dense rain was falling, they walked home together. A vague dejection weighed on Stephen: he liked the tearful rain to beat on him. Twice Mr. Erle made conversational overtures to him, but he remained silent. "You are growing too absent, Stephen. Do you know that I have been speaking to you?"

"Have you? I——"

"I was speaking of your future. I asked you if you would prefer a country life, or that I should send you to London. A philosopher, it is true, learns from nature; but he should translate her teachings to society. As the companion of *her* childhood—almost *her* brother." He paused, and put his handkerchief to his eyes. "You will stand to me in the light of a son. Freely choose."

Remembering his promise to Mary, Stephen said—his manner was unduly haughty—"Kinsman, I thank you for your kindness. I the more freely accept it, that I hope not to be so burdensome to you henceforth as hitherto. I received this letter yesterday. From its tone I imagine it to be an earnest of at least pecuniary success." It was from the editor of a scientific London journal, who thanked Mr. Harley for his contribution to its columns. A cheque was enclosed in payment for former papers.

"Very good," said Mr. Erle, with slight chagrin of manner; for his pupil was beginning to use his own wings: but the eighteenth century philosopher knew from the character of the journal that it was not as a child of nature should.

"My dear boy, suffer me to embrace you!"

Again theatricals! In that dark wood, under the sorrowful heavens! Stephen slightly returned the pressure of his guardian's hand. "To please journal readers," he replied, "is a small success; only valuable as it gives me independence."

"Undoubtedly! and that is the situation to which all men should aspire. But I foresee a career for you. Stay with me and my children, and reflect lustre on us."

"Beautiful words," quoth the nurses, when, soon after their birth, Mr. Erle invoked Fate for his children.

Beautiful words again! but Stephen remembered them

"From this hour I dedicate my life to theirs," repeated Mr. Erle as he entered the nursery, with a gesture suited to his new rôle of father. The nurse was awed when he said with dignity—"My good woman, bring your charge, that they may behold their father."

"Master is just hushed to sleep, sir; but his brother is awake."

"Whom do you already call master?"

"The eldest, sir, of course."

"Already the feudal prejudices, Stephen! 'Master,' so soon? Thou, child," he continued to the younger infant, which the nurse by his desire laid in his arm—"thou, child, shalt be my especial care. Thou shalt not suffer from a law that should be obsolete." The lately born looked at him at first with serene gravity; then, notwithstanding the gracious promise, the little face wrinkled, reddened, and a cry broke forth. The eldest twin awoke. The second nurse announced the fact. Mr. Erle turned to him. His philosophy was troubled by the scream his voice had evoked.

"Never let me hear him called master," he said, as he looked at the child. "We are equal."

"Yes, sir."

"We must early cultivate the principle of freedom."

"Yes, sir."

"Which could not be done, if you exalt one brother above the other."

"No, sir."

"Follow these principles in your attendance on these children."

"Certainly, sir."

"The elder seems better tempered than his brother."

"Poor child; he hasn't so much strength to cry."

"Is screaming a sign of strength?"

"The best could be, sir."

"In like manner, Stephen, the unruly excesses of young nations show their strength."

"True, kinsman, 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy.' That of the French republic; and I see, that also of the second equal."

"Please, sir," said the nurse, fearing that the gentlemen were forgetting the twins, "I think it would be well if

Master—I mean the eldest young gentleman—were christened.”

“I’ll consider, nurse,” said Mr. Erle, hastily. “I am inclined to think it would be useful. A certificate is often wanted.”

“Sir, it might be well to have it soon done. The doctor thinks him very delicate. Poor child, he’s not well shaped for health.”

“How! What! Is anything amiss?”

“He will come straighter, sir, if he be well minded.”

“Good God! is he deformed?”

“Curious how God is appealed to when feeling is excited,” thought Stephen.

Mr. Erle was put out. He had a sensuous tone of thought. A regenerator of mankind could not, for appearance sake, be deformed! Yet Mr. Erle was kind-hearted, in spite of the *Encyclopédie*. “Poor child. But he is like his mother, nurse, who was so beautiful.”

“His brother is beautiful, sir. He will have his father’s dark eyes. He is the handsomest dear! I must get him a proper cap for the christening. He is wearing borrowed clothes now. Little Master’s—”

“You may have the title, poor child,” said Mr. Erle, turning to his first-born. “There will be equality enough. Nurse, they shall be publicly named to-morrow; but I will at once call them, without clerical help, Herbert and Cecil;—the eldest after his grandfather; Cecil after poor Mary’s father, Stephen.”

“You are very obedient to old custom, kinsman.”

“’Tis as well in trifles. Besides, Cecil is a pretty name.”

“And Herbert?”

“Yes, poor child. Stephen, I think Cecil will fulfil the destiny I have prophesied. He will be a patriot.”

“Very possibly, he already cries out when over-kindly handled.”

“Pooh! Stephen; you are too paradoxical. His training shall be my especial care. He has an ardent disposition.”

“And Herbert?”

“Herbert! He will be too delicate ever to be an active benefactor to his race.”

“Who knows?” said Stephen, lingering behind Mr. Erle, who had left the room. “I may mould him as Mary would.”

and if his mind grow, what signifies brute strength ! Does he always lie awake ? So very still, nurse ? ”

“ Most times, sir : and with that wise look. I wish he cried and slept more.”

“ ’Tis most men’s vocation—alternate sleep and wailing. He may do better yet.”

“ I hope he may, sir. He is very puny.”

“ He is the eldest son, I think,” said Stephen, musingly.

“ By half-an-hour he’s the heir, sir.”

“ And also, perhaps, to a better inheritance than Erlesmere, nurse.”

“ Surely, sir. He has the eyes of an angel this minute.”

“ Pshaw ! What is the colour of angel’s eyes ? He is born, I think, to possess mind and thought above his brother. A good inheritance, indeed.”

“ Beautiful words,” was the nurse’s oft repeated critique.

“ But I would rather listen to Mr. Erle.”

“ No doubt : Mr. Harley always seems like a man in a dream.”

“ Master Cecil is the favourite,” said his nurse.

“ Oh, fathers only think of their family grandeur. But Mr. Harley said truth,” returned the other. We will leave them in possession of the nursery.



CHAPTER IV.

“ All that we see, or seem,
Is but a dream within a dream.”—EDGAR POE.

FIVE years and six months passed, and the world had spun fast down the ringing grooves of change. Erlesmere remained to all appearance the same. Mr. Erle philosophized with daily increasing benignity, and Stephen grew more and more entangled in metaphysical meshes. He was one of those few who disdain to cut a knot in them, and so escape. The dark house and steaming woods were gloomy as ever ; the leafy shrubs and tangled grass the same. Yet the terraces and gardens were not blossomless as before. Two fair young flowers might be seen there, drawing down *the unwilling* sunshine to dark recesses and through inter-

woven laurel arbours where it had not before ventured. The twins had passed the ordeal of infancy successfully, and the assiduous care of Herbert's nurse had given him tolerable health. Still he looked a pale exotic, with drooping head and shrinking limbs beside his brother. Less in height, in spirit, in strength, his thin sharp features and slight frame were in pitiable contrast to Cecil's Guercine beauty. Hitherto he had been drawn in a little chair; but his fifth summer brought him better health. When the days were bright and warm, the children played together on the grass. Mr. Erle had, with his whole heart, devoted himself to Cecil's nurture. He had no greater pleasure than to watch the lithe motions and graceful gestures of his pupil as he sported with his fellow butterflies. Herbert was not neglected. Every care was lavished upon him; but his frequent ill-health made his father half afraid to meddle with such fragile materials, for once or twice, when his father had impressed a principle on his baby mind, the child had been made ill from fright and excitement. He was backward in perception, and thought emphasis was anger. Cecil, on the other hand, was brave, apt to learn, and never shy. He could already repeat sundry philosophical axioms, when called upon to show off; and he had shown that he understood what the rights of men were, in his own case. He could talk French a little; and Béranger's "Quatre ages" was a stock-piece in his repertoire of performances. "Cecil has the more generous heart of the two; he has the best nature," said Mr. Erle to Stephen, one summer-day, while they watched the twins from the terrace.

"He has no suffering." Herbert was very dear to Mr. Harley.

"That is the cant of discontent," retorted Mr. Erle, hastily. "Happiness is the birthright of all. Cecil already knows that virtue secures it. See him giving his toys to Herbert, who is crying for them—what unselfishness!"

"Yes, that he may run after that butterfly yonder."

"I wonder the Effinghams have not arrived," remarked Mr. Erle. "They said they should be here at half-past four. You never saw Effingham, did you, Stephen?"

"No; I was not born when your sister married him. They have been in India nearly ever since, have they not?"

"They went there from the altar. It seemed a bad match for her at the time; as he was only a subaltern in the Company's service. I alone, of my family, witnessed the marriage. I had no prejudices on the score of money. Harry Effingham expressed eternal gratitude in consequence."

"Very proper for a bridegroom."

"My poor sister died ten years ago, and left no children."

"You do not know his present wife?"

"No; but that makes no difference in my welcome. It will be a convenience to them to stay here for a fortnight, while Effingham House is being prepared."

"I was there yesterday. Every one seemed in raptures at the revival of the family glories."

"I believe Effingham has made enough to disencumber his estate. 'Tis not large, but capital land. The boundary runs with mine for a mile or so."

"There is a child?"

"So I hear: a daughter. Eh, Stephen? And the boundary runs with mine! Wasn't that a carriage?" he added, as a murmur of wheels sounded through the still air.

A servant came. "Sir Harry and Lady Effingham and Miss Effingham have arrived."

Mr. Erle rose hastily from the low seat. He tottered a little. Stephen offered assistance. "Not yet—not yet; 'tis not time for help, yet. I'll live these twenty years. Tell the nurses to have the children ready when I send for them. The boundary runs with mine, Stephen!" Mr. Harley sauntered down the slopes to where Herbert sat alone. Cecil was hunting dragon-flies. The nursemaids worked and gossiped on a garden-seat apart. The child started when Stephen laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You are not afraid of me, Bertie?"

"Afraid of you, cousin——! but I was thinking ——"

"Of what?" asked Stephen, gently. He was ever tender to the boy.

"I was thinking of Sign," the child said, with low voice, reluctantly.

"What is Sign?"

"I was going to ask you, Stephen; for you know everything, and I never saw his face."

"You are dreaming, Bertie."

"So nurse says. He's like a great black shadow, and he stands by my bed, and ever so many after him; but he's the chief."

"Why do you call him Sign?"

"They all do." Mr. Harley stood thoughtful for awhile. *What* were these visions! Were they meaningful, or mere dyspepsia creations. He did not think the stomach the peculiar palace of the soul. Moreover he believed in occult agencies;—so to speak, zoophytic intelligences—linking soul with matter. (Mr. Harley was very singular.) At length he said, "Don't fear him, Bertie: his black shadow haunts us all; but, as we grow up, we get used to him."

"But he is so black."

"Truly he is; but men like darkness. However, I try to keep in the light. I hope you will do likewise."

"Oh, Steenie, tell nurse to put my bed in your room, and keep me with you. I'm afraid to sleep in the nursery."

"I'll see about it. But do you remember what I said you were, Bertie?"

"A spirit, you called me, cousin."

"And a spirit can go everywhere, as you did yesterday to Robinson Crusoe's island."

"Yes——" said the child doubtfully.

"So when you see Sign coming, pass by him quickly, and go to Elf-land, where the leaves whisper words."

"Are you in earnest, Stephen? Nurse says you don't mean what you say."

"I am always in earnest, with you, Bertie."

"Oh, Stephen, I wish you could always talk to me."

"Why? don't I often puzzle you?"

"But I like that; and it's so nice when I do understand you. I never understand papa; and I don't think nurse knows as many things as you do."

"Don't you? And why?"

"She said glass was made of sand and seaweed. Now it can't be, because sand is like earth."

"Beware of Sign! Never trust appearances. Glass is made of sand."

"Well, she didn't explain it."

"Nor will I. You must learn to believe, Bertie. I say it is so. Do you believe?"

"Yes, I believe you."

"Why?"

"Because——. I don't know, exactly."

"You are a mystic. Say mystic, Bertie. Don't forget the word. It means a man who believes without knowing why."

"Papa tells Cecil he is not to do that."

"You are not like Cecil in anything. I wish you to be a mystic; and some day I hope you will be an enthusiast. Now you must go to nurse, and be dressed for the evening. You will see a young lady of your own age."

"Will she be like nurse?"

"I cannot say. I have not seen her. Nurse, have the children ready when Mr. Erle calls. The young lady's boundary will run with Master Bertie's!"

"Yes, sir, they will play nicely together. But too much running is bad for Master Herbert."

"I agree with you, nurse;" and Stephen passed on to take his afternoon stroll in the woods. "I do not like these strange weird fancies in the child," he thought. "He must come to my room for change of scene. And yet, who can say?" But we will not dream with him of dreams.



CHAPTER V.

"With every pleasing, every prudent part,
Say what does Chloe want. She wants a heart."—POPE.

SIR HARRY EFFINGHAM of these presents was a very different being from the stripling who had married Mr. Erle's sister. The greeting, "How are you, Harry," melted on his host's lips into—"I am glad to see you at Erlesmere, Effingham;" for Mr. Erle, despite philosophy, discerned persons.

"Allow me to introduce Lady Effingham. My little daughter, Mildred." Mr. Erle's French grace had grown rusty during his five years' seclusion; but he summoned its remains to his aid. His welcome was elaborate. Lady Effingham was perfectly well-bred. Mr. Erle's courtesy was that of the bag-wig and sword age, yet she listened *with marked attention*. "You are very kind, Mr. Erle, *give us lodging near Effingham manor; and it is most*

pleasant so soon to have this opportunity of making your acquaintance——”

“ Our children, I trust, will not fail to continue the friendship Effingham and I have maintained, though in different continents.” Sir Harry remained silent the while. His daughter Mildred stood close by his chair, and clasped its rails tightly. The dusky light, broken by the Venetian blinds, the dark oak walls, the strangeness of the scene, frightened her. A sun-ray gilded her clustering fair curls, and seemed to play upon them aureole-wise. In the shade beside her sat her father, darkened by her brightness: cold and stern and grave; yet Mildred loved to be near him when she could rather than her mother, for all the smiling countenance and sweet voice. Sir Harry seldom spoke but when he conceived it his duty; and then in a low emotionless voice. His gray eyes looked command before his thin lips uttered it: command not to be gainsayed. Short, slight, and with hands femininely small, yet few would have cared to meet him as an enemy. Stephen Harley thought his mechanical instincts governed the higher faculties unduly. But Stephen was, perhaps, no judge. Sir Harry, when he came to know Stephen better, maintained, in retort courteous, the thesis, that a cabbage-plot orderly tilled is better than the garden of the Hesperides kept by a methodless dragon. He was a strict disciplinarian, and loyal to King, Church, and State. He was wedded obstinately to his principles; but he scarcely knew on what they were based: indeed, he did not admit the right to discuss the small circle of truths which bounded his moral universe. In his dislike of what he called theorising, he refused to examine even the good of the views he professed. A singular guest at Erlesmere. His wife was a connecting link between him and his Rousseau-ite host. Not that she held views or principles of any special class; but, in whatever circle she was thrown, she prevented discord. She would have found a common subject for Leo X. and Luther to agree upon. Ill-humour vanished before her all-conquering courtesy: yet there was no unpleasant assumption of peace-making. Her influence was intangible: everyone in a room was soothed by her entrance; everyone felt he was appreciated; no one knew why. In her presence Mr. Erle left off philosophy, and Stephen became

conversational. Lady Effingham was invaluable in society; but Mildred stayed by her father's side. There was a break in conversation.

"You look tired, my child," said Lady Effingham.

"It is time she should be introduced to her cousins;" and Mr. Erle looked at his watch.

"Shall the meeting be in the nursery? they will be happier there." Cecil advanced with alacrity to meet his cousin Mildred. Herbert held back. She was somewhat older than the twins in age—far beyond them in life.

"We will leave them to make acquaintance," said Lady Effingham.

"This is Miss Effingham's room," observed the nurse.

"Thanks—yes—very nice. I'll come and see you asleep, Milly. When I'm dressed I'll send Benson to you. Be a good child.—Adieu."

"Good night, mamma," the child said indifferently, holding up her face to be kissed, but with a side glance of anxiety towards the new nursemaids. Dinner passed over pleasantly. Lady Effingham talked, that silences might not occur; Mr. Erle, to keep up his ancient reputation for fine breeding; Sir Harry, because 'twas his duty; Stephen, when it was his pleasure. Herbert and Cecil appeared, as was their custom, at dessert: Cecil bounded to his father's side; Herbert shyly posted himself by Stephen, and fixed his gaze on Lady Effingham: she was to him an inscrutable mystery. He glanced at Sir Harry, but quickly returned to his investigation of her. "Sit here, my boy," said Mr. Erle to Cecil. He placed him proudly at his right hand.

"Shall I repeat the 'Quatre ages,' papa?"

"Not now, my son; 'tis not the occasion."

"Do you know French, Cecil?" asked Lady Effingham.

"Oh yes. I can sing the 'Marseillaise.'"

"Not now, Cecil; not now."

"Why not now, papa?"

Mr. Erle bit his lip.

"Do you know the name of the greatest general in the world?"—the *enfant terrible* continued, to Lady Effingham.

"The Duke of Wellington?"

"Oh no! Napoleon!" Reader, Sir Harry Effingham believed in the *Quarterly Review* of those days! Lady Effingham laughed musically. "You must tell me no

more, Cecil. I do not know enough of history to argue with you." Sir Harry turned silently to the pale face by his side. Herbert did not drop his eyes: he looked attentively at the soldier's stern countenance. "Are you good?" Herbert asked, at length.

"I hope so—when I do my duty."

"Stephen says he's not."

"And are you?"

"No," said the child gravely. "I am lazy; and I'm a wicked child, for I broke the jug. But I'm a Mystic."

"Who told you you were wicked because you broke the jug?"

"Nurse."

"And who said you were a Mystic?"

"Cousin Stephen."

"Do you know what a Mystic means?"

"A man who believes without knowing why."

"Ah. Will you learn another lesson from me? Learn to *do* as you are told without knowing why."

"A *sequitur* to believing," said Stephen drily. He had been silent hitherto.

"Not always; and to do is more useful than to believe." Lady Effingham rose to go.

"I must bid good night to Mildred," she said. "Mr. Erle, may I have Cecil and Herbert for my companions?"

"Pray take her some cherries; really she must have some in her exile."

"You are too kind. Thank, thanks; but this must not be a rule." She took the fruit-loaded plate. The twins followed her slowly. They passed a table in the hall that stood in a dusky recess: Lady Effingham laid the plate on it. "Not asleep yet!" she exclaimed, on opening the nursery door. Benson was still engaged in brushing the golden curls, Mildred's chief beauty. "Well, make great haste! Good night, children all," she said carelessly. Cecil and Herbert had followed her into their little cousin's room.

"Benson," she added, "let no rules be altered. It is necessary for Miss Effingham's health that she keep regular hours, and the same diet she is used to." The mother's evening visit was paid. The children looked after her with awe, in spite of her gentleness—awe and admira-

ration! Lady Effingham was still beautiful, and always well dressed, characteristics which often excite in susceptible children a passion of love and worship little suspected by the objects.

"I'll go and call nurse, young gentlemen," said Benson; "I won't be a minute away, but mind you don't get into mischief."

"Papa sent you some cherries," broke forth Cecil when the maid had gone; "and aunt Effingham left them in the hall."

"I wonder what she will do with them," quoth Herbert, reflectingly.

"Oh! nothing," said Mildred. "Mamma never lets me eat cherries. But I did once," she added mysteriously.

"But why did she take them from papa, if she didn't mean you to have them?" said Herbert, trying hard to solve the problem.

"Now, master, run off to bed," ordered the hasty nurse on her arrival. "It is very bad for you to be out of bed so late."

"Nurse," asked Herbert, as he was being placed in his cot—(he was very inquisitive that night)—"why do you say in the morning, when bed is pleasant, that it is bad for me to be in it; and now, when I want to stay up, you won't let me?"

"You're the strangest child! What's pleasant is mostly wrong, master. That's why."

"Papa says that's not true," observed Cecil. "I heard him and Stephen talking about it."

"Well," said the nurse—when they were, she hoped, asleep—"they surpass all, for young philosophers!"

"What's a philosopher, nurse?" inquired a little voice.

"Bless us, master! Why ain't you asleep, child?" She went to the cot side and rearranged the tossed coverlet.

"Do tell me, nurse, what you mean by a philosopher."

"A man who knows everything, dear."

"Tell me a fairy story."

"Nonsense, dear! At this hour?"

"Please do. I want to go and sleep in Elf-land. I want to go away from this room." She yielded to his pressing,

and read him the history of *Little Ellie*, and her adventures—as narrated by Hans Christian Andersen—with the butterfly, the toad, the mouse, and the dear swallow that carried her to Fairy Land. He was sleeping pleasantly when she had finished. “A strange child he is,” she said mysteriously to her companion.

“Mr. Harley puts odd fancies in his head.”

“He’s a very odd gentleman. I heard him tell the child yesterday, that grass wasn’t green nor the sky blue.”

“It’s my opinion some day he’ll be in Bedlam,” replied the other indignantly. “But isn’t Lady Effingham a nice lady?” * * * *



CHAPTER VI.

“Höher Sinn liegt oft in kind’schem Spiel.”—SCHILLER.

IMMEDIATELY after breakfast next morning, Sir Harry rode over to Effingham. “He is going to ‘do his duty,’” said Lady Effingham, smiling, as her husband cantered out of sight on a fleet little Arab horse which accompanied him everywhere. “England’s expectations are realized in Harry.”

“But pleasure is sometimes a duty,” said Mr. Erle, as he prepared to escort her through the antique gardens, with a flourish of courtesy.

“I quite agree with you; it is often so,” she observed. There was a covert meaning in Lady Effingham’s reply, lost on Mr. Erle, but a ray of light on her character to Stephen, who followed, leading Herbert by the hand.

“Child,” he said, “I see Sign now.”

“Is he following us, Steenie? He follows me in my dreams.”

“He follows children, but men follow him.”

“He is like a dark shadow, cousin?”

“Yes, very dark; but with a glittering sheen on it, like serpents’ scales, Bertie, or that gleaming silk before us.”

“You’re not in earnest, Stephen; if there was anything there like that, I should see it.”

“Begin to be a Mystic; believe without seeing.”

"Is Sign there still?"

"I have not heard him speak for a minute or two."

"Why, I hear nothing but an odd sound in the grass."

"I hear Cecil's pony cantering: see, there he is, and nurse." A turn in the gravel walk disclosed to Mr. Erle his favourite Cecil, managing a little Shetland pony with grace.

"Oh, papa!" he cried, "tell nurse to let go the rein; for Ingenu won't go well while she pulls his head in that way."

"Please, sir," said the nurse, hot and breathless, "Master Cecil does trot so fast."

Master Cecil grew very red as she spoke, then said, passionately, "Papa, she never lets me do things like men; and she says everything pleasant is wrong; and she called Herbert a philosopher, papa."

"Fie, my boy; you are not one, it seems. Nurse, leave the rein loose. Off with you, Cecil, for a canter round the field."

"He's growing too old for leading-strings," observed his father to Lady Effingham.

"I think he is."

"Steenie," whispered Herbert, "why mayn't I ride?"

"You are not strong enough, Bertie."

"I should like to so very much. I wish I was Cecil."

"You are better as you are, child."

Bertie's eyes filled with tears: he was already sensible of his brother's superiority to him in performance. Cecil rode on his pretty pony, and talked to that beautiful lady. Cecil could run on the grass when it was damp. He walked in silence for a few steps; then, in a low voice, he said, "I *am* better as I am, Steenie, because you talk to me."

"Cecil looks almost ready for Eton," observed Lady Effingham to Mr. Erle.

"I trust to form him for the world myself. Nature points out that the parent should educate the child; the eagle teaches the eaglet."

"And the frog the tadpole," muttered Stephen, who had overheard Mr. Erle. Lady Effingham's voice was too soft and low to reach other ears than those she designed to address: a useful knack of modulation.

"Steenie," asked Herbert, "am I a fool?"

"I hope not."

"Who are fools?"

"Wicked men."

"Cecil called me a fool this morning."

"He is no judge."

"Are you a judge?"

"No; because I am in many ways wicked, and therefore a fool; and therefore not fit to be a judge of other fools."

"I don't understand all you say, cousin, but I like to think about it."

"Follow that taste, Bertie, and you will do well. I don't understand a great deal that I think about, but I like those subjects the best."

"Where is your daughter?" Mr. Erle asked of Lady Effingham.

"Oh, Milly is learning lessons, I suppose."

"May she not have a holiday, and play with my boys?"

"Certainly, as you propose it. Cecil"—he had dismounted, and was walking by their side—"you will take care of Milly?"

"Oh, I will take great care of her," he replied, proud of the trust reposed in him. Herbert's eyes filled with tears, his little hand trembled within Stephen's.

"What is the matter, Bertie?"

"She didn't ask *me*."

"Is it not well to escape the troublesome commission?"

"I would do anything for her," said the child, earnestly.

"But I must divide the charge," interposed Lady Effingham, suddenly turning to Herbert, as though she divined the pain she had caused him.

"Bertie, you will watch over your new playmate." His heart bounded, his colour went and came, the tears which had filled his eyes ran over the lids.

"Crying, Herbert; for shame! to be ill-tempered on this sunshiny morning. Look at Cecil's merry face," interposed Mr. Erle.

"I understand, dear child," said Lady Effingham, with sweetest voice. "I give Milly to your especial keeping: you will be kind to her, I know. Will you carry this parasol for a second, while I fasten my bracelet?" Joyfully he took the parasol, and carried it carefully, as though

it were a living thing; yet still his eyes overflowed, and he was glad at Stephen's silence. Meantime they had entered the gardens. They paused in a conservatory: Lady Effingham loved flowers. "Here, my boy, stick this in your cap," said Mr. Erle, giving Cecil a sprig of euphorbia.

"And, Bertie, wear this for me, my young knight," said Lady Effingham, fastening a spray of heliotrope in Herbert's Glengarry bonnet. The child kept that relic in his treasure-box, spite of must and mould, until he possessed a desk: then it lay in a secret drawer of his desk until manhood came upon him. Afterwards, having occasion to arrange his papers one day, he found it. After a look, 'twas hurriedly thrown in the fire, and watched with painful reminiscence till it disappeared in ashes. "Here comes Milly with Benson," Lady Effingham exclaimed; for the lessons were over, and the child was taking her daily walk, holding fast by Benson's hand.

"Why don't you run about, Mildred? This is the country, you know; go and play with Herbert." The children looked at each other in silence. Lady Effingham passed on.

"I'll show you a bird's-nest in the privet hedge," said Cecil, "if you'll come with me."

"May I?" asked Mildred of her maid.

"Yes, dear: play about with Master Cecil."

"But *she* said you were to play with me," interposed Herbert.

"She'll come with me," said Cecil, triumphantly; "and I'll show her my wheelbarrow and the rabbits, and the bridge I've made across the stream. Come along, Mildred;" and he took her by the hand as they both ran together across the gardens. "They're a beautiful pair!" observed the maid, following them.

Mr. Harley, silent while these events occurred, now turned to pursue his stroll. Herbert stood looking after the children. At last they disappeared in a thicket of shrubs. His hands were tightly clasped; his lip quivered. "Bertie, come with me," said Stephen, gently. For answer, he flung himself on the ground in passionate weeping. Mr. Harley said nothing: he took him in his arms, and carried him for a while. When he grew quieter he asked, "Child, why are you not glad to see Cecil happy?" No

answer. "Mildred will play with you within-doors ; you are not strong enough to run about in the long grass."

"But why am I not?" exclaimed Herbert, petulantly.

"I cannot tell you, Bertie."

"But Mildred liked to go with Cecil."

"Listen, child," Stephen said very earnestly. "Try to remember my words. Probably most people will like Cecil better than you. He will be cleverer, handsomer, and more pleasing to strangers than you will. What you desire he will snatch from you : those you love will give their love to him. Learn, Bertie, not to care for others. Learn to love the inalienable good"—He paused.

"What is it? Please tell me."

"Knowledge and thought, child, which produce wisdom." Though but half comprehended, the words sank deep in Herbert's mind : they begot in him deep visions of future greatness. The despair that threatened to overflow his childish heart was checked. Stephen was all in all to him ; his comforter and guide—his only confidant. Stephen's often unintelligible words were much-pondered oracles ; Stephen's wishes were law. Stephen interpreted his dreams, and his scarce less unintelligible day-thoughts, for the present.

CHAPTER VII.

"L'on bâtit dans sa vieillesse, et l'on meurt quand on est aux peintres et aux vitriers."—LA BRUYERE.

"BERTIE," said Stephen in the afternoon, "you are to sleep in my room in future, and Cecil is to have a room to himself. Shall you like that plan?"

"You should have had a room too," added Mr. Erle, "only that nurse says you are afraid of the dark."

"Not of the dark, papa," with hesitation.

"Of Stephen's spirits, perhaps! When will you be a man, Bertie?"

"Sooner than we think," said Stephen quietly. Lady Effingham came into the room at the moment. "Bertie has all a man's chivalry already," she observed.

"Child," said Mr. Harley, in a low voice, "remember what I said."

Mildred and Cecil followed together. Cecil led by a chain a silky-haired Blenheim spaniel. "Oh, how pretty!" exclaimed Herbert. He was keenly alive to beauty in any form.

"I'm glad you're not afraid of a little dog, Bertie," said his father. "He is Cecil's. I did not think you liked dogs." Herbert bent over the little animal, and kissed its ears, and looked into its large bright eyes.

"Come, Mildred, we've played with Fidèle long enough," exclaimed Cecil. "Come and look at my bricks."

"I'll play with Bertie now," she said, with childish coquetry.

"Oh come, Milly! Here are all the horses coming home from exercise, and your papa behind them. Oh, how they are jumping!" 'Twas irresistible. Mildred ran after Cecil.

"Go and see the horses, Bertie; won't you?" said Lady Effingham.

"No, thank you: I'll stay with Fidèle." Cecil whistled from the next room. The dog bounded away in answer. Sir Harry Effingham came in. No one saw the flush of colour on Bertie's face but Stephen; he also felt the child's grasp of his hand tighten. "Life has begun with you to-day, Bertie."

"Oh, Steenie, I wish it was yesterday."

"Why?"

"I was so much happier."

"'Tis of no great importance to be happy."

"I don't understand, Steenie."

"Live, child, to *be*, not to *feel*."

"Cousin, I want to improve; but my head aches when I'm at lessons."

"You've had three lessons to-day, worth a library of school-books."

"Well, my little man, did you break a jug to-day?" asked Sir Harry. He was almost indulgent, for he found that his orders had been well executed at Effingham.

"Where is your playmate, Milly?"

"She's with Cecil, in the next room."

"And you stay with Mr. Harley?"

"Yes." Sir Harry looked surprised; he could not understand Herbert's unchildishness. "Cecil is already Mildred's *devoué*," observed Mr. Erle.

"What is the distance to our home?" asked Lady Effingham.

"About three miles."

"But only a mile by the fields," Mr. Erle interposed.

"Shall we walk over there *en masse* to-morrow?"

"By all means; only I fear that you will not return to this dark old house from Effingham."

"Harry tells me it may be made charming; but there will be no welcome there as here."

"Effingham is the prettiest thing in the shire. Our woods join; 'tis so near, that our children must not fail to improve their acquaintance."

"I suppose your boys ramble far and near."

"Cecil does. I consider Nature the best teacher of youth. My sainted wife and Stephen were examples of my system of education."

"I'm only a foster-child, claiming another parentage," murmured Mr. Harley.

"Ah, Stephen has much to learn," said Mr. Erle, smilingly; "Stephen is full of obsolete prejudice."

"Have you acquired any from him, Bertie?" inquired Lady Effingham.

"Bertie is very backward—his health is bad; but now that he is stronger, we may change pupils for a time, Stephen, eh?"

"He could not appreciate your lessons yet, cousin——"

"Ah, well, perhaps so—but some day——. I intend to launch them in the world, Lady Effingham, and then fold my robe about me, and die. By the way, I've made my will, Effingham, and appointed you their guardian. Have you any objection?"

"I always refuse, Erle; unless you allow me to manage them according to my notions of right."

"Oh! as to management, I conclude they will manage themselves by that time."

"Meantime, I must decline the trust without that condition."

"My dear fellow, I consent; by all means, Stephen, you will be the second. A mere form, you know."

"I accept, also; not as a mere form."

"What a lovely afternoon?" exclaimed Lady Effingham, as if the fact suddenly presented itself; "Do let us walk to the oak wood yonder. Mr. Erle, in rising, supported himself by the arm of his chair. "The sun this morning has affected my head a little; but a stroll in the shade will set me right." Mr. Harley and Sir Harry remained within.

"Bertie, go play with Cecil and his dog," said Stephen.

"I like to be here, Steenie; mayn't I stay?"

"No; I order you to go." The child looked wistfully back; but he said no more. Sir Harry looked at Mr. Harley's face as he spoke; it pleased him. However singular his dark lustrous eyes and worn features, there was no conceit about the mouth. "I like that child's obedience," he said, when Bertie had gone. "You follow a different method, I see, from my brother-in-law."

"I follow no method; I teach the child what seem to me truths. The necessity of obedience is one."

"If you have no system, how can you enforce obedience?"

"I believe in my truths; the boy believes in me." Sir Harry thought this a strange assertion. He looked, however, with interest at Stephen. He would have continued the subject, but Mr. Harley excused himself, and went to his laboratory.



CHAPTER VIII.

"Mimes in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,
And hither and thither fly;
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro."—EDGAR POE.

SIR HARRY resumed his *Morning Herald*. He had read all the leaders, and was entering on the tales of our "own correspondence," when Lady Effingham came in hurriedly. "Mr. Erle has had a fit, Harry."

"Where is he?" asked her husband, with intensified calm, as he rose.

"Lying on the terrace—insensible."

He rang the bell, and left with Lady Effingham orders

that the doctor should be sent for, and Mr. Erle be carried to his room. "Caroline, go to the nursery: keep the children quiet—send Mr. Harley to me on the terrace." She was glad to get away from the ground floor—away from the terrible sight and hearing of Mr. Erle, whose stertorous breathing was painfully audible in the drawing-room. She met Mr. Harley hurrying across the hall. "Is it true?" he asked hastily.

"Yes. I am going to the children."

"Herbert is in my study: he is very sensitive."

"Sir Harry wishes for your assistance as soon as possible."

"I am going; but take care of Bertie," he said, lingering.

"For God's sake go, Mr. Harley!" With that strange consciousness which falls on all who are in a death-stricken house, the children were more expectant than astonished when Lady Effingham appeared. "Mr. Erle is very ill: he has had a fit."

Cecil looked startled, for his nurse clasped her hands. Mildred turned pale: she had more experience. "You had better fetch Master Herbert from Mr. Erle's study, nurse, and be careful that he is not startled. Mildred, come with me to my room: we are best there, I think." Thus she fulfilled her task. Once in her room, some sal-volatile and a tragic novel soothed her ruffled nerves. "How is he, Harry?" she inquired, when, after two hours, her husband joined her.

"The doctor can do nothing. Caroline, I wish to know if, in case of poor Erle's death, you can receive these boys at Effingham for the present? I am their guardian; it is our duty."

The asking was a form. Lady Effingham replied, "Of course, Harry."

"I came to tell you, Caroline, that the servants forgot to ring the dressing bell: it wants but ten minutes of dinner-time. We shall probably go early to-morrow to Effingham: I have made the necessary arrangements."

Dinner passed almost as though there were not a dying man in the house. Lady Effingham and the doctor maintained some conversation. He put his professional agreeability into mourning, and retailed melancholy anecdotes

connected with his calling. Sir Harry tried to elicit some of Mr. Harley's principles. They were, if Mr. Erle died, of consequence. He was to be his fellow-guardian; perhaps his guest at Effingham. But Stephen was taciturn beyond his wont. He had never loved Mr. Erle; but old ties would be broken by his death; old associations would be torn up. He was calm, but the depths of his heart were stirred. "Surely they will not send the children down this evening!" said Lady Effingham, as their little chairs were placed at the table when dessert was laid. Cecil came in as she spoke: 'twas too late for change: she seated him by her side in her kindest manner. "Why is not Herbert with you?"

"Bertie was crying so, that nurse said he had better stay with her."

"Herbert was frightened by the way he was told what has happened," said Mr. Harley. He looked at Lady Effingham as he spoke. She understood his covert reproach. She henceforth disliked him as much as she thought him worth the feeling; and dislikes once rooted grow while we sleep. "I could wish Bertie had more of this little fellow's stamina," said the doctor. "I must go and see my patient."

"And I Bertie," said Lady Effingham, with a haughty glance at Mr. Harley, as she passed from the room.

"School might correct Herbert's weakness," Sir Harry observed, when he and Stephen were alone.

"I think not: school would kill him." Sir Harry liked the straightforward contradiction. "You are the best judge," he said; "but have you Erle's prejudice against schools?"

"I should send Cecil to one at once; 'twould cure him."

"You think he needs cure?"

"Conceit and disobedience are serious faults."

The doctor re-entered the room. "In a few minutes all will be over." They rose together, by a common impulse, to witness death's avatar. "All" was "over," ere they reached the sick room.

"What was over?" Stephen mused. "What was begun?"

"Can nothing more be done?" asked Sir Harry Effingham. *He thought only of doing: thinking was with him*

but the drudge of doing. "You perceive," said the doctor, in a death-bed voice, "coma has stopped the impulse to expire; therefore no blood has been arterialized."

"I will inform Lady Effingham," said Sir Harry. "Mr. Harley, the boys should be told as soon as possible."



CHAPTER IX.

"La resurrection se fait par le vent du ciel, qui balaie les mondes. L'ange porté par le vent ne dit pas : Morts, levez-vous ! Il dit : que les vivants se lèvent !"—DE BALZAC.

MR. HARLEY went to the nursery. It was half-past eight o'clock: a bright evening light shone on the children's cots. Cecil sat on the floor and played with Fidèle. Herbert lay dressed on his nurse's bed: his eyes were closed; he was deadly pale. A fear fell on Stephen: "Nurse, nothing has happened?" He suddenly knew how dear the child was to him. 'Twas new to him to be conscious of the pains and pleasures of personal affection: he had believed hitherto that his watchful care of Mary's child had been a duty performed, rather than the fulfilment of affection. But the child's look of deathfulness, as he lay helpless; his orphanage, his approaching removal to Effingham, roused in his guardian a power to love, hitherto dormant. "Master took on terrible," replied the nurse to his hurried question. "He was quite scared like."

"Steenie," said Herbert, faintly, "come here and take my hand, and don't go away."

"I thought he was asleep," muttered the nurse; "but he don't have the ways of other children." Mr. Harley sat down by the bedside, and talked quietly of such subjects as he thought would interest the child. "Stephen," asked Herbert, after a while, "why is it always different when you are here!"

"It is you that change, Bertie."

"Indeed I don't, Stephen. Do I?"

"You are changed in form and mind since I came into the room: you were sorrowful and frightened; your eyes were dim with tears; your cheeks were white; now you look a strong, happy child."

"And shall I change again?"

"Many times."

"And shall I get happier, or be frightened as I was?"

"That rests much with yourself."

"But oh! Stephen, nurse said that papa was——" He shuddered.

"Bertie, you've just changed, from a sad pale child, into a strong, cheerful little boy."

"Yes."

"Your father has also changed from what he was,—ill and suffering."

"To what?" asked Herbert, breathlessly.

"To a state of freedom from sickness and what we call suffering, Bertie. This change is called Death." Herbert pondered his cousin's words.

"But nurse said it would be terrible if papa died."

"He is dead. It is not terrible."

"Oh! Steenie, stay with me always. Always!" Mr. Harley bent over him, and kissed him. He had not done so before, since that day by Mary's corpse. "Steenie, you will never leave me?"

"Never; till you wish me away, Bertie."

"I'm so glad! Cecil, did you hear?"

"Cecil is not there, Bertie. I sent him and nurse away while I talked with you. I will carry you now to your little cot in my room: I shall be near you all night." He did not leave him till he slept, and then he went to look for Cecil. Sir Harry had met the boy in the corridor and told him all. There had been a burst of childish sorrow; but he had soon fallen asleep afterwards. Mr. Harley found him so: his cheek flushed; his dark hair tossed. All the more beautiful he lay. "No need to watch over him," thought Stephen. What did Stephen know of the future? Sir Harry Effingham sent to say that he should be glad to speak with Mr. Harley. Stephen joined him in the dining-room. "Mr. Harley, I propose receiving the children, for the present, at Effingham. It will give Lady Effingham and me pleasure if you will accompany them."

"I thank you. My future requires consideration," replied Stephen, after a pause.

"I have arranged that the children should come," said Sir Harry, with impatience: he hated indecision.

"'Tis the best course for them. I will stay, in any case, till after the funeral."

"I may leave it to your care."

"You agree with me in preferring simplicity?"

"None that is unusual."

"My cousin could hardly care how the concourse of atoms called *him* should be re-united."

"I do not see how such considerations affect the case," said Sir Harry, haughtily.

"Nor I. 'Tis a question of social habit, not of philosophy."

"I cannot see what philosophy has to do with social habits," said Sir Harry, charging hotly at the word.

"Soi-disant philosophy."

"Every kind is 'soi-disant.' Plain men must take things for granted; they cannot thread your labyrinths."

"The truth that lives in a labyrinth is generally a Minotaur—a chimerical monster."

"I only take to be truth, the plain laws of God and man."

"And I," returned Stephen, "the laws of God *in* man." Sir Harry poked the fire, and finished his wine in silence.



CHAPTER X.

"Faith may be defined as fidelity to our own being."

COLERIDGE.

"WAKE up! Bertie," said Mr. Harley next morning to Herbert, who slept late. "Wake up, and show me what toys you wish to have at Effingham."

"I have no big ones, you know, Steenie; my dried leaves and chrysalises are in my box in the nursery. But you are coming?" He looked up imploringly.

"Surely. I must stay here for a week; but I'll go and see you every day. Make haste and dress now. I'll send nurse to you: 'tis breakfast time."

Sir Harry and Lady Effingham, Mildred and Cecil, were assembled. The elders read the morning papers with absorption; her cheek was brightly tinged; his lips were compressed. There was an electric atmosphere in the room, in which the children drooped. "Do you think it

good for Bertie to be so late?" asked Lady Effingham, in gentlest tones.

"Not as a rule," said Mr. Harley; "but he is not strong to-day."

"It will be a trial to his loving nature to part with his associations here."

"Mr. Harley," said Sir Harry, "I hope you have decided to come to us for the present?"

"I hope so, Mr. Harley," his wife quickly added; "if only for the present." Stephen understood her wish, that he should refuse. Herbert opened the door timidly: he looked pale and weak. "I gladly accept your invitation for the present," said Stephen, quietly. In this Mr. Harley was ill-bred to Lady Effingham; but he thought Herbert's happiness at stake, and he took little heed of her. In return, she lavished on him dislike, which she meant should be contemptuous. To use an apologue: The brilliant lamp scorned the distant star; it outshone the pale gleam; and, to the bystanders, the lamp was all in all. Victory for the lamp! But remains to be seen if the Central Eye will countersign the decree. Meantime Lady Effingham had placed Herbert by her side. "We are going to-day to Effingham," she said; "shall you like that?"

"Very much. If Stephen goes too——"

"Oh! he is going—and Cecil, and Mildred, and Fidèle."

"I shall ride," observed Sir Harry. "Cecil, you can come with me on your pony—Herbert must drive, I suppose?" There was a shade of depreciation in his tone. Unpunctuality for breakfast was a serious failing; sensitiveness was the result of fostered vanity, in his mind.

"Bertie shall have a pony next year," said Lady Effingham.

"But he's afraid," said Cecil.

"Are you afraid, Herbert?" asked Sir Harry, putting down the newspaper. There was no answer. "Speak, boy; are you afraid?" The thin pale face grew paler. Still no reply, unless the overflow of a tear might be called one. "Are you sulky, Herbert?" The child flushed indignantly. He stammered—"I am not sulky."

"Then answer." After a moment's silence Sir Harry rang the bell, and sent for Herbert's nurse. "Take away

that young gentleman," he said, "until he has recovered his temper."

At eleven the carriage came to the door, with Sir Harry's Arabian and Cecil's pony. "Please, sir," said the nurse, "Mr. Harley said he would take Master Herbert over in the afternoon."

"Very good. Cecil, sit erect in your saddle." Lady Effingham smiled inly. Herbert heard the sound of the departing carriage, as he sat in Mr. Harley's study. Stephen walked to and fro in thought. "Bertie," he said at length, "Why did you not answer this morning?"

"I don't know, cousin."

"Shall I tell you?"

"I couldn't speak."

"You were afraid of Sign. He was by."

"I didn't see him."

"You did not like to offend him, by saying you were afraid of the pony."

"I don't understand."

"Why, because people say fear is disgraceful and a *sign* of unmanliness, you did not confess the truth; so you were frightened by Sign."

The child pondered awhile; then, "But, Stephen, people say it is wrong to be a coward."

"Bertie, you told me Sign had companions: 'people' are his followers. Never believe what you hear is said by 'people.' It was not wrong for you to fear riding: you should have said you did."

"Cecil always says I'm a baby."

"What then? I wish I were one."

"You, cousin!"

"I should know more of truth, perhaps; at least, I should be less full of prejudice. Baby is an honourable title, Bertie. Don't be in a hurry to be brave, child; or to do as others do: don't try to overcome your impulses: don't study motives. If you are afraid—better to be afraid. I'll tell you a story: "A lark once joined some barn-door fowls that were feeding from a trough. Several laurel berries had fallen into the trough from an overhanging branch. 'I don't like those berries,' said the lark, timidly. 'Pooh! nonsense,' replied a cock; 'we are always fed from this trough. This is the food of which

all right-thinking fowls eat.' 'Pooh ! nonsense,' echoed all the hens ; and ate in emulation of each other. The lark made a wry face ; but to show his knowledge of the world, he made shift to swallow the berries. Presently getting used to their flavour, he ate as fast as the most educated pullet. The hen-woman coming into the yard soon after, found them all stretched lifeless on the ground. 'The foolish birds !' she exclaimed, finding laurel berries in their craws, not to know poison !' 'Ah !' muttered the lark, with its last gasp, 'I was even more foolish than the rest. They ate from habit ; but I went against my instincts, in servile imitation of others.' Don't be like that lark, Bertie : live in the open fields, where you can see the sky and follow your nature ; then you will avoid the example of denaturalized bipeds."

"What are denaturalized bipeds, Stephen ?"

"Men and barn-door fowls, child : feathered and unfeathered." Herbert slept well that night at Effingham ; and dreamed that he was indeed a lark, "true to its kindred points of heaven and home."

CHAPTER XI.

"And so the duck was taken on trial, but no eggs appeared. And the tom-cat was master in the house, and the hen was mistress ; and they always said, 'We and the world.'"

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

WHEN Mr. Erle made his will, he calculated on a longer life than was allotted to him. The family estates were strictly entailed on the eldest son ; but he had purposed, year by year, to lay by a fixed sum for Cecil's future provision. By economy, this accumulation would have become considerable in a few years ; and Mr. Erle thought he should leave an ample fortune to his darling Cecil, as residuary legatee of his personal estate. Meantime, in fulfilment of a kind of promise to Stephen Harley's mother, and renewed to his own wife soon before her death, he had left his ward four thousand pounds. Deducting this, the residue of his savings was barely enough to give Cecil education and a *profession*. Some days after the will had been read, Sir

Harry Effingham and Stephen chanced to be discussing its tenor—its contradiction to Mr. Erle's known wishes. "After all, we can control no circumstance," observed Mr. Harley.

"Fatalism! Mr. Harley."

"Possibly."

"I am glad to think Eton masters will view life differently."

"I think Herbert cannot go to Eton."

"Yet school is often good for delicate children," observed Lady Effingham.

"No one can understand Herbert's powers better than I do," said Stephen. "My cousin confided his education peculiarly to me."

Lady Effingham glanced at her husband, hoping for some resentment of Mr. Harley's tone; but Sir Harry respected antagonism. "I feel that education is hardly my province," he observed calmly. "I think, however, the habits of discipline gained at public schools are absolutely necessary to the after career of a gentleman."

"Perhaps. To be chairman at quarter sessions: an improving farmer: even to vote with his party in Parliament. Yes, Eton does seem to fit boys for these uses."

"Well, Sir."

"Herbert may attain higher ends."

"He will do well, it seems to me, if he does his duty in the offices you mention; but what do you propose to do with him?"

"I would educate—not instruct." Sir Harry looked up impatiently. He disliked what he thought quibbling; but Stephen's countenance was not that of a quibbler. The soldier gave way to the student. "We will make a compromise, Harley," he said. "Bertie may remain under your tutorship for the present; but Cecil must go at once to some preparatory school, and in two years to Eton."

"Do you not think," interposed Lady Effingham, "that Herbert might be under the same system as Mildred for a while: he is so delicate—so little advanced?"

"Herbert needs a mother's care," replied Mr. Harley, gravely. "Perhaps Lady Effingham will watch over his health; but as I shall remain at Erlesmere, I will attend to what he learns."

"Very well, Harley, be it so. Herbert can stay here;

CHAPTER XIII.

"Boys are at best but pretty buds unblown,
Whose scent and hues are rather guessed than known;
Each dreams that each is just what he appears,
But learns his error in maturer years."—COWPER.

MEANTIME Cecil had arrived. He was in the drawing-room when Mr. Harley and Herbert came in. Sir Harry was talking to him with evident pleasure. Lady Effingham was occupied by a stranger: she turned, however, to Herbert, and introduced Lord Clancahir, a schoolfellow of Cecil's.

"How are you, Bertie?" said his brother, nonchalantly giving him his hand. Without a pause for the answer, he resumed his talk with his guardian.

"What have you been about, Bertie?" asked Lady Effingham. "I hoped you would have taken Mildred to the Mere. Miss Hesketh was longing for an opportunity to lecture on entomology." Herbert did not like her tone; nor to be ranked before the Eton men as a pupil of the governess: he replied with sullenness, "I wished to be alone."

"You are really becoming too cynical," observed Lady Effingham, smiling; but you have been walking with Mr. Harley, *cela s'explique*." She continued her interrupted conversation with Lord Clancahir. Herbert sat down and began rapidly turning over the leaves of some books on the table.

"Be yourself," whispered Mr. Harley. Herbert bit his lip, and glanced at Cecil and his companion. The newcomers were worth looking at. Cecil tall and stalwart,—his dark hair and eyes gleaming in the red evening sun. Full of life and energy, with well marshalled talents, and tact to show his mental wares to the best advantage, he was fluent of speech; and a readiness of adaptation to the moods and prejudices of others, made him a general favourite. "His extreme beauty of form gave grace to his manner: his manner reconciled the most invidious to his good looks. Wherever Cecil came, he *was seen*, and he conquered. Very different was Lord Clancahir, his schoolfellow. Without Cecil's strength, but with a will that

overbore opposition ; less popular, but when he chose more fascinating ; he was at first sight not so prepossessing as his friend, though superior to him. They were now on the verge of manhood : neither were to return to Eton ; and the comparative independence of reading with a private tutor was to be their only remaining preparation for Oxford. Lord Clancahir, with the ease of one practised in society, conversed with Lady Effingham ; while Cecil and Sir Harry discussed county affairs. And Herbert ? He glanced at the mirror which reflected the various groups, and turned away impatiently, as he saw himself so small and slight—so childish ; looking all the more so for his round jacket and turned-down collars. Herbert worshipped beauty ; and it was a pain to him that he was so colourless and wan ; that his lustreless brown hair, in which the sunlight found no resting-place, should fall so straight beside the sharp lines of his face. He had never seen the ardour and depth of his dark blue eyes, and did not know how they beautified his countenance at times : he only knew them as they looked with disappointment at his pale irregular features.

“Herbert,” said Lady Effingham, making a fresh effort to draw him into conversation, “do you think there is space on the Mere for these Eton men to row ?”

“My boat is a mere fishing-punt.”

“Have you much fishing ?” Lord Clancahir asked, with so pleasant a voice that Herbert could not but look less sullen as he said,

“I do not care for fishing ; but I believe there are plenty of carp and perch in the Mere.”

“Oh, nothing worth trying for,” observed Cecil. “You can have some shooting at Erlesmere, however, Clancahir. There are lots of rabbits, and it wants very few weeks of September.” Now, Cecil had always arrogated to himself “free warren” at Erlesmere, and Herbert paid little attention to his seignorial rights ; but this interference displeased him : he remained silent, for pride and reserve alike hindered reply.

“The rabbits are a nuisance at Erlesmere,” said Lady Effingham. “In a few years, Bertie, you will repent your Brahminism. They will spoil your projected gardens.”

"I do not wish Erlesmere to be preserved for shooting," said Herbert.

"Your friends, Cecil, can shoot here what they like," said Sir Harry, drily. Herbert coloured: he felt the rebuke.

"I think my friend Thompson, the keeper, will admit me to the pet rabbits which Bertie preserves *from* shooting," said Cecil, with a slight laugh.

"Have you read Waterton's books?" asked Lord Clancahir, turning to Herbert. "He has your dislike to making his home a slaughter-house."

"Pshaw! Clancahir; how can you encourage such nonsense?"

"Nonsense, indeed!" muttered Sir Harry.

The gong for dressing sounded; and gladly Herbert shut himself up in his room: he paced quickly to and fro, to quiet the angry beating of his heart. Mr. Harley met him as he went down-stairs. "This will never do, Bertie." Herbert did not reply. They were both very silent at dinner. Sir Harry talked to the Etonians of the school and scholars, past and present. Lady Effingham listened: she was a good listener, even to Lady Mary de Broke's after-dinner prose touching parish matters. Lady Mary was the rector's excellent wife: estimable and happy, because the two desires of her life had been well placed, and were thoroughly fulfilled. To be a clergyman's wife, had been the dream of her youth; that Mr. de Broke should be her husband, was its embodiment. She was supremely happy: happy in visiting the poor, with a kind word for the sorrowful, and yet kinder bit of news for some ancient gossip of the village; happy in her trim rectory, and its nursery full of children; happy even when she transferred her work, and her home talk, and her gentle motherly interests to the different atmosphere of Effingham. Of all her guests, she wearied Lady Effingham the most; and with reason, for she was the least social, and Lady Effingham's *métier* was society. With all her good breeding, she found herself overcome by *bore* when the after-dinner half-hour was to be devoted to the monotony of what Lady Mary called "chat." Never had she found it more overcoming than on that still, oppressive August evening. They were quite alone. Herbert had, contrary to custom, remained in the dining-room with the

elder gentlemen. The other boys did so as a matter of course. "Don't imitate: be free!" whispered Stephen, when he observed this; but the boy frowned and staid.

"You've no idea how pretty the school children look in their new gingham," observed Lady Mary de Broke.

"Really?"

"Basil likes the pattern so much."

"I heard Lord Clancahir claiming relationship with you," observed Lady Effingham, struggling to escape. "How very unlike a school-boy he is!"

"Oh! Clancahir was always that; he had just that grave easy manner when he was ten years old."

"He is Irish, I suppose, from the name?"

"Murrough, Lord Clancahir: could anything be more Irish? He has a principality of mountain and bog somewhere in Munster."

"And his mother?"

"Irish too. My father married her sister."

"He is not one's idea of a Paddy."

"Oh! he is, or thinks himself, Castilian,—Phœnician,—Semitic, for aught I know."

"An 'Asian mystery,' in short."

"Basil says my Hubert is like Clancahir," observed Lady Mary, after a pause.

"I am not quick at seeing likenesses; but I think your little boy is singularly like you."

"Do you, indeed, think so?" exclaimed Lady Mary, with excitement. "The thought has occurred to me also."

Lady Effingham stifled a yawn. "Shall we stroll through the gardens? it is so very hot within doors."

"Oh, yes! I can crotchet quite well walking."

"Is she going to bring those red mittens with her!" thought Lady Effingham, despairingly. It was their destiny. In vain the summer silence hallowed all around; in vain the whole scene suggested repose; Lady Mary's fingers never abated in their monotonous action, while, with her eyes fixed on her work, she talked unceasingly, with the same rapid slowness: no bull, reader! After an hour of fluent discourse, the subject of it was at the same stage in the discussion as before. The gentlemen found the drawing-room deserted. Cecil and Lord Clancahir stood by the open window. Herbert loitered near. They

watched Lady Effingham gliding through the shadows: she wore white; Lady Mary de Broke, some darker colour. "A beautiful woman, by Jove!" muttered Cecil. Lord Clancahir's lip curled. Herbert liked him better: he felt encouraged to say, pointing to the two ladies:—"They represent the Useful and the Beautiful." Lord Clancahir turned towards him with surprise: "Lady Mary is my cousin," he said haughtily.

"Well," said Cecil, "I confess I wish more of us personified the Useful; 'tis a better quality in the long run than the Beautiful."

Lord Clancahir seldom condescended to discussion; he turned away,—while Cecil, putting his thumb and forefinger into each waistcoat pocket, brushed by Herbert, and joined Lady Effingham as she returned from her unre-freshing stroll. "Is Mildred still kept in the durance vile of the schoolroom?" he asked: "will she not come down to-night?"

"I should think she was almost in bed now: her hour is nine. Have you not seen her yet, Cecil?"

"No: I am not an *habitué* of Miss Hesketh's territories, as Bertie is."

"I suppose you are a more dangerous personage, in Miss Hesketh's eyes. But you will see Mildred to-morrow."

"Her appearances used to be few and far between. I envy Bertie his tame-cat privileges."

"Poor Herbert! How do you think he is looking?"

"Not changed in any way. I don't understand him: I can't get on with him."

"Hush! we are at the windows."—They entered. Conversation became general; except for Stephen and Mr. De Broke, who sat together and talked of Plotinus; and Herbert, who, wearied by the various emotions of the day, fell into one of those reveries of which his life was half composed. He but imperfectly awaked to the realities of existence when Lady Effingham retired for the night. Her form, passing down the long corridor, seemed to him a vision: all around, the phantoms of a dream. "Are you going, Stephen?" he asked, as Mr. Harley rose to leave.

"Home, Bertie? yes, of course, but you will be with me early to-morrow." What was home? Herbert wondered. Was the word also but the incoherent jargon of a dream?

CHAPTER XIV.

"When I contrasted my feelings and my situation, I grew mad. The constant jar between my conduct and my conceptions was intolerable."—DISRAELI.

VERY lonely Herbert felt as he went to his room that night: he heard his brother's and Lord Clancahir's voices until past midnight, in animated conversation; and his own silence and solitude were revealed to him by the echoes of their companionship. He struggled to recall Stephen's arguments of the morning; but now they seemed to him sophistries. We struggle to believe that we control Impression; that we can neutralize Pain; that to Virtue we can offer ourselves as a voluntary gift. But Obedience is better than Sacrifice: we must be content to be controlled, not controlling. Herbert had mental powers of no mean order, but shrined in a weakly frame; and, by physical suffering, their strength had been impaired. He could not pursue principles to their results: his ideas had more fantastic quaintness than logical connection. Mr. Harley had not set himself to check his pupil's peculiarities. He endeavoured to strengthen the spontaneity of Herbert's mind. He left his capacities for reception almost uncultivated, in his anxiety that the boy should be free from the prescriptive opinions of common society. He treated Herbert as an intellectual machine, and overlooked his manship. He educated him for a philosophical Utopia, and disregarded the conditions of actual life. Herbert's sensitive temperament was little suited to such a system; but he adopted Stephen's theories because he loved him. He tried to adopt his intellectual armour, because he suffered acutely from a sense of physical incapacity. Very lonely he felt as he sat in his room. The cold moonlight seemed to increase the fever of his thoughts, while he brooded wearily over his inferiority to the two Eton boys. He was alone, and tears of bitter disappointment trickled down his thin cheeks: his warm young love was condensed by the cold of the world. At last he turned from the moonlight, with a shiver; and, slowly undressing, he lay down for the night, without seeking or obtaining consolation. Dreams haunted his sleep, of constant failure in

whatever he undertook,—failure always brought about by his brother. He was late next morning. Every one was engaged in conversation when he entered. 'Twas natural that his appearance should be little noticed; but his irritated temper perceived a slight in the way he was greeted. He sat down sullenly in the place left for him, between Miss Hesketh and Sir Harry. Cecil and Mildred were talking busily, and did not observe his entrance. Lady Effingham dispensed to him his cup of tea, and resumed her conversation with Lord Clancahir. He drank it nervously, but ate nothing.

"Late risers have seldom good appetites," observed Miss Hesketh.

"Late risers are seldom good for much," muttered Sir Harry, speaking to his morning paper rather than to Herbert.

"What are our prospects for the day?" asked Lady Effingham, rising. "How are you going to amuse Lord Clancahir, Cecil?"

"Clancahir is quite above English amusements. Nothing short of playing the hero contents him."

"You had better ride, boys," Sir Harry said, with as kind a smile as ever appeared on his regulation countenance.

"Perhaps it is the best thing to do. Eh, Clancahir?"

"Very well," he replied, absently.

"Is this Mildred's day for riding?"

"She must not ride, Harry; it is too hot."

"I'm very glad you decide in this way, Lady Effingham," said Miss Hesketh, triumphantly. "She has been quite wilful about it." Mildred glared, but she said nothing.

"Of course, Mildred, you do as Miss Hesketh desires;" and her mother turned with smiling face to Lord Clancahir, as she said, "You must try Milly's horse."

"Cecil, how shall we mount you?" said Sir Harry. "I am sorry that I must ride to the Grange to-day; but I said I would, otherwise you could have had Assaye. Douro is at grass. You must try Bertie's new pony."

"Bertie's pony! Oh, by all means."

"Very well, then, that is settled," said Lady Effingham. "Bertie, you will take Miss Hesketh and Mildred on the *Mere*. It will be cool and shady."

"I am going to ride," he said, doggedly, though his voice trembled.

"Hey-day, sir!" exclaimed Sir Harry. Herbert grew paler, but he remained silent.

"What do you mean?" asked Sir Harry, sternly.

Lord Clancahir looked attentively at the boy: he observed his quivering lip, his trembling hands. "If Mr. Erle will allow me," he said, with grave courtesy, "I will take his place. I should like boating better than riding, under this sun. Will you entrust your daughter to me, Lady Effingham?"

"I should say you were a better guardian than Bertie," interposed Cecil. "But what am I to do, while you are playing *preux chevalier*? The boat doesn't well hold more than three."

"You will ride Bertie's pony with me to the Grange," said Sir Harry, drily. Herbert muttered something inaudibly, and left the room.

Sir Harry smiled. Cecil laughed. "Bertie's odder than ever," he said.

"We must make allowances," observed Lady Effingham.

"He is completely spoilt," murmured Sir Harry. "I'm sorry I left him in Harley's hands."

"I'm glad I was not in them," said Cecil.

"I could not imagine you a pupil of Mr. Harley's," remarked Mildred.

"Past ten o'clock!" observed Lady Effingham. "Why are you not at your piano, Mildred?" Miss Hesketh obeyed the hint. Mildred sullenly followed her from the room.

When the morning papers had been sufficiently studied, Sir Harry and Cecil strolled to the stables to order their horses. Lord Clancahir threw himself on an ottoman in the drawing-room, and, by turns, read a volume of Coleridge's prose works, and looked out upon the dusky woodlands quivering in the haze. Presently, Lady Effingham came in—"You like Coleridge better than farming?"

He looked up. "Coleridge suits an Irishman: he had faith."

"Ah, we shall agree about books, I doubt not. Will you come to my sitting-room?"

"I am glad I did not ride," said Lord Clancahir, when they had sat there for a while. She smiled. Lady Effing-

ham was beautiful when she smiled. At the moment Lady Mary de Broke was announced. The smile remained. "Dear Lady Mary," she said. "I am sure she has come on some charitable errand. I will leave you in possession here, while I go to her."

Lady Mary had come on a trifling parish errand; but that fulfilled, she staid for a little "conversation." "How well Mr. Cecil Erle looks!" she said after a pause, considerably left by Lady Effingham, that she might go away.

"Poor Herbert is in melancholy contrast," she replied *impatienteé* by the new subject. "Poor fellow, I fear he feels his inferiority to his brother acutely."

"Basil thinks Mr. Harley mismanages him."

"Harry is sorry now that he gave him up so completely to Mr. Harley; but he was so ailing from the first, that he did not like to interfere."

"'Twas almost a pity," said Lady Mary, "that should have been the eldest."

"Almost a pity," replied Lady Effingham, suppressing a yawn, "that poor Bertie should have struggled on through so many years of ill-health. I hardly thought he would have lived when first I saw him. I have always pitied him, so lonely and so sickly as he is! Even his father neglected him for Cecil."

"Poor child!"

"'Tis very sad," continued Lady Effingham, in the conventional accents of pity; "but his future promises little happiness as his childhood has given him. He is morbidly sensitive, and yet he has not the qualities which gain love from any class of people."

"I think hard-hearted people must be attracted by the look of suffering—at least, to feel for him."

"But his mind is either totally undeveloped, or deficient in some necessary quality. And his exterior——"

"How fortunate you are in your daughter, dear Lady Effingham! It must be a sad trial when one's children in any way like poor Herbert. Thank God, mine promise to be all I could wish; but *à propos*, 'tis their dinner hour. Really I have been forgetting them." She bade good morning, and walked home in complacent meditation on Herbert's misfortunes; while Lady Effingham returned to her *boudoir* with a sigh of relief. Lord Clancahir, you

as he was, was singularly fascinating. They discussed "Tennyson" until luncheon time, when Miss Hesketh and Mildred reappeared.

"Where can Bertie be?" asked Lady Effingham. "Have you seen him, Milly?"

"Not since his dignified exit this morning." Lady Effingham disliked a tone of ridicule in a woman: 'twas bad taste. Nor did she fail to observe the look of calm disapproval on Lord Clancahir's countenance. She said mildly—"There was much to annoy him, Mildred."

Miss Effingham finished her dinner in silence,—too often the only notice she designed to take of her mother's remarks.

"I see Mr. Harley riding by the window," observed Miss Hesketh, to break a pause. He came in.

"Where's Herbert?" he asked abruptly. "We were to have ridden to Eastham this morning, but he has not kept his appointment."

"Bertie is nowhere to be found," said Lady Effingham. "He has rambled somewhere," she continued, with embarrassment new to her. "He has forgotten luncheon."

"Was there any reason for his not coming to Erlesmere?" he said.

"He had one of his fits of sullenness; and you know Sir Harry approves of implicit obedience." He left the room hastily.

"Philosophers are a wonderful race," she observed, with a smile; "and Mr. Harley not the least wonderful of the fraternity." She expected cordial agreement from Lord Clancahir; but he replied coldly,

"Mr. Harley seems different from most people; but he appears, undoubtedly, to be a gentleman."

"What do you think of his pupil?" asked Miss Hesketh, with malice.

"I have only heard him speak four times, and three times I liked what he said."

"Poor Herbert has some good qualities, certainly," returned Miss Hesketh, patronisingly.

"We will take a walk in the woodlands," said Lady Effingham, rising. "The chestnut shade will be delightful."

"Such a day is made for enjoyment," exclaimed Miss Hesketh, with well regulated rapture. "I am sure our dear Herbert forgot time in the pleasure of being out."

CHAPTER XV.

"Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom but from rage and pain."—COLERIDGE.

MISS HESKETH was right. Herbert had been "forgetting time." He had left the breakfast room in great anger. He felt fiercely rebellious, not merely towards Sir Harry Effingham, but against life, with its daily scourge of pains and disappointments; against the social rules by which he was fettered—even against the laws of his being, of which Mr. Harley said so much to him. He flung himself blindly on the floor of his room, for a gush of tears filled his eyes. This turbulent passion was new to him. Though there had been frequent cloudings of his childish happiness, they had been only spring-time storms, through which the sun shone; storms which scarcely interrupted the singing of the birds, or dimmed the brilliance of the flowers. Now he was entering on the thundrous summer-heats of life. He was not physically strong, and his rage soon exhausted itself; but he continued to brood sullenly over his position, as he leant against the open window-sill and looked out over the woods of Erlesmere. Sir Harry's tyranny, Cecil's contempt; and Lady Effingham—why did she treat the Eton boys so differently? He bowed his head low and wept again, but this time more in sorrow than in anger. Thoughts of her gentle manner, her kind words—memories of her touch, calmed his fever. He sat on, quieted, while the echoes of his passion grew fainter and fainter, like a departing demon voice. There was no sound without, during that hot noontide, but the quiver of insect wings. The silence suited his mood well. Presently soft voices broke upon his calm; one of them was Lady Effingham's. Sweet and low, but silver-toned, it pierced the heavy summer air. Herbert listened greedily, that he might not lose a ripple of the sound. The words came up apace: they crowded on his ear, like waves upon a drowning man. "Almost a pity that poor Bertie should have struggled on through so many years of ill-health. He has not the qualities which will gain love from any class of people. His mind seems deficient, and his exterior ——" * * *

The August sun beat on his bare head, but he heeded it not. The trailing boughs kissed his brow with their cool dark leaves, but he did not feel their greeting. In vain the breezes that played among them wooed him to stay with them. He passed on, treading down the wild flowers with a heavy step for one so young—a weary, stumbling pace. His eyes were cast down, but he did not see the royal orchis in his path, or the tall meadow-sweet through which he brushed, or the sceptral iris holding its court among the lowlier flowers. He stumbled on through the soft. The sky was cloudless, but he did not look up at the serene heights. The sun glared on him, but he felt no heat. He passed to the high road. 'Twas all the same, when his feet grew blistered, when his limbs ached, when he trembled with fatigue. His ideas were confused. The words he had overheard sounded monotonously in his ears, like the surf on a shingly shore—a grating whisper mingled with a long wail. And so for miles he staggered, his steps keeping time to the cadence of the words. He could not stop. The sunshine blinded him; the earth seemed to reel and heave: still, as if impelled by some necessity, he dragged himself on. He was not “absent:” he knew that he was running away. His mind was unnaturally clear: every past event was graven on his memory with strange precision, and his calmness grew as his strength failed. Circumstances had to him the vivid pouring of a mirage. His leaving Effingham seemed a matter of course—a proceeding prompted by mere common sense, and most reasonable. And this with his amazing eyes, so sunk since the morning—sunk in such dark circles, yet flashing with unwonted brilliance, and by fair pale fires making yet more pallid his sunk cheeks and bloodless lips! So for ten miles—five hours. The first mile cost him an hour; for slowly now he trailed his feet through the dust-drifts. The sun met him face to face; but with dim glazed eyes he stared straight on, and his frame grew yet more rigid as his strength gave way. There was a dull sound of hoofs beating on the dusty road. They came nearer and nearer. It seemed to Herbert the steady beating of his heart. Words were spoken—they mingled with the refrain that sounded unceasingly in his ears. A hand was laid on his shoulder he awoke, as

from a dream, to a sense of confusion and intellectual disorganization. Stephen spoke. Herbert looked at him vacantly. "You had better go on to Holmvale. The boy's mind is amiss." Herbert wondered who spoke. "He requires a different treatment, certainly, from that which has caused all this." Herbert felt a supporting arm wound round him—not before it was needed.

"You have spoilt the boy," said the second speaker, Sir Harry Effingham. "No wonder he is what he is."

"Yes, he needed more kindness," said Mr. Harley in a low voice, as he bent over Herbert.

"Pshaw! he would be all the better for a flogging."

"Cecil," said Mr. Harley abruptly, "will you ride on without delay to Holmvale, and order a chaise to be sent here? It can be here in half an hour."

"I agree with you," said Sir Harry, drily, "that the boy had better not return to Effingham; but will you inform me what you intend to do with him?"

"If he recover this attack, we will go abroad."

"This attack! But, true, the sullenness of a cowardly runaway is a disease in modern practice."

Cecil laughed, as he gathered up his reins, and placed his foot in the stirrup. There was a low cry—a sudden spring—a fierce struggle. 'Twas a fearful sight to see these brothers. Herbert with sudden strength of passion and bleared cruel eyes. Cecil, at first powerless from surprise; then roused to angry exercise of his stronger bone and sinew; then scornfully revengeful, even when his brother's sudden frenzy had nearly exhausted itself—even when Herbert's hold relaxed and his head fell back. With every muscle set, with flashing eye and quivering nostril, Cecil stood upright—a model of boyish beauty. Herbert, pale, disfigured, clung tenaciously to him. There was a pause. "That will do," said Sir Harry, with supremest scorn. "Mr. Harley, you had better control Herbert. Shake him off, Cecil." As one would a venomous insect, Cecil shook his brother to the ground.

"It is enough," said Mr. Harley, in a low voice. He stooped, and raised Herbert's unconscious form in his arms. *Cecil folded his arms proudly.*

"*We shall not be in time for dinner,*" said Sir Harry,

looking impatiently at his watch. Mr. Harley's treatment of his pupil did not fulfil his ideas of discipline.

"Cecil, we will ride on to Holmvale, and order a chaise. We can return by the lower road, a mile shorter than this. Good day, Mr. Harley." Stephen did not look up. He busied himself with Herbert, ministering to him with the tenderness of a woman; but the scorn on his lips harmonized ill with his occupation.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Croyez-moi, les miracles sont en nous, et non au-dehors. La verge d'airain appartient à tous."—DE BALZAC.

THE chaise came, and Herbert, still unconscious, was carried to the best room of the little inn at Holmvale. Next morning he was violently delirious. The doctor talked of brain fever; the good landlady assumed her mournfullest aspect; her husband drank his beer with a deeper sigh. Herbert was in imminent danger, and Mr. Harley's anxiety infused gloom into the kindly atmosphere of the "Erle Arms." On the second day a few lines of inquiry were sent by Lady Effingham. 'Twas a very charming note, written in an anxious style, lamenting the amount of occupation which prevented her from driving over, and adding Sir Harry's good wishes to her own for Bertie's restoration to health. She really must ask a few lines, to reassure her, from Mr. Harley; meantime she signed herself "in haste." She said not a word of Cecil, or of Herbert's running away: in short, her note was pitilessly pitiless as winter sunshine. Stephen crushed it in his hand as he watched Bertie's feverish tossing. The boy grew worse; perhaps the perfume exhaled by Lady Effingham's note awakened memories of her. He unceasingly repeated the words he had overheard. "Poor boy!" murmured Mr. Harley. "'Tis a bitter punishment for his idolatry." Two more days passed,—Stephen lived years in these hours.

"A gentleman has called, sir," said a waiter, in the course of the third day. He gave Mr. Harley a card.

"Tell Lord Clancahir that I am engaged," he said impatiently, shading his bleared eyes from the light whir-

poured through the open door into the darkened room. But Lord Clancahir stood on the threshold. Gravely, but without conventional sick-room solemnity, he came forward.

"I did not expect a visitor from Effingham, still less you, Lord Clancahir," Mr. Harley said, bitterly. The erect statuesque beauty of the young man was a vexation to him.

"What is the cause of this?" asked Lord Clancahir, with a certain calm which overbore Mr. Harley's first impulse to resent his intrusion.

"Idolatry. His idol fell and crushed him."

"Poor fellow!" Lord Clancahir spoke gently, almost indifferently. He walked to the bedside. "He is misunderstood at Effingham." Herbert turned and looked fixedly at him.

"You will excite him," whispered Mr. Harley.

Lord Clancahir placed his hand on the boy's forehead. Mr. Harley walked to and fro, irritated, yet constrained to conceal his irritation. Herbert grew calmer—he seemed inclined to sleep. Lord Clancahir withdrew his hand cautiously. "I must wish you good morning, Mr. Harley. Let me know at any time if I can be of use to you."

"You have been of use," said Stephen, who watched his patient with surprise.

"Probably. My race are said by their dependants in Ireland to have a gift of healing."

"Such a thing could be," said Mr. Harley, thoughtfully.

"Do you return to Erlesmere?"

"No. When Herbert is recovered we will go abroad."

"'Twill be good for him."

"Very," muttered Stephen, as Lord Clancahir left the room. Herbert slept profoundly.

"An Eton school-boy! Strange! An Eton school-boy talking in Eastern fashion of a 'gift of healing,' and with strange authority. Prometheus redivivus!" Now Mr. Harley, in his self-arrogated godship, knew little of the true Divine. He felt an antipathy to Lord Clancahir, though he could not but acknowledge his strange superiority; and he watched rather in bitterness than in affection the sleep which was restoring life to his ward. The Philosopher was but a man after all—a disinherited man—not a God, nor yet a son of God.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Many men there are, than whom nothing is more commendable when they are singled; and yet in society with others, none less fit to answer the duties which are looked for at their hands."
—HOOKER.

THE years passed on, and Mr. Harley and Herbert did not return. Formal letters of business were occasionally interchanged between his guardians. But, whether Mr. Harley wrote from the new or the old world, from Mexico or from Athens, he never enlarged on the topics which commonly fill the home correspondence of travellers; he seldom alluded to his ward's health or pursuits. Sir Harry's replies were equally concise. Twice Lady Effingham betook herself to her boudoir and a sheet of foreign letter paper, and twice her courage failed to break the solitudes of its vast plain. By degrees Herbert's existence was forgotten, and he was only known to exist as the heir of Erlesmere and Cecil's elder brother. A strange leash of travellers were Stephen Harley and his pupil: not bound to any definite goal, not sightseers, seldom curious to investigate even the wonders at hand which attracted others from afar; they carried neither geologist-hammer nor amateur sketch-book; and, though society sometimes lay invitingly open to them as "Sir Erle" and "Professor Harlei," they scarcely ever made acquaintances. "We have travelled that you might gain strength, and with strength, power to think, Bertie," said Mr. Harley; "not that you might see sights, and be able to talk about them."

"But sights might suggest thoughts," observed a listener.

Mr. Harley and Herbert were leaning against the bulwark of a "Collins" steamer bound from New York to Liverpool. It was early, and few of the passengers had yet emerged from their cabins on this the first morning of the voyage. Mr. Harley turned quickly to see who had spoken. Lord Clancahir was shaking hands with his pupil—companion now, to speak truly; for tutorhood had for some time merged into friendship. Still, however, Mr. Harley dogmatized; but not, perhaps, more to Herbert than to other men. His dogmatism did not spring from belief that he alone held true opinions, but because

he saw that most held no opinions at all. To his fellows he dogmatised; to himself he doubted. In spite of his Mysticism, his belief in Beliefs, his Enthusiasm, he doubted; for Faith is a gift, not a mental attainment; at least faith in the Saviour-God. Mr. Harley's divinity was a Zeus. Meantime he bowed to Lord Clancahir; while, with a momentary sting of reminiscence, Herbert turned slightly away. The Irishman's manner was perfectly unchanged; it still carried with it a spell of unaccountable authority. "You have been long away."

"Five years," replied Herbert, restlessly.

"I saw Erlesmere last winter; is was in good preservation, in spite of your absenteeism."

"I hope to live at home in future," said Herbert, with a pleased manner. He liked the acknowledgment of his possible usefulness.

"With Mr. Harley's views," said Lord Clancahir, with a smile, "you might as well have been doing something at home."

"Herbert travelled for health," observed Mr. Harley drily.

"I trust he has gained strength."

"Knowledge does not seem to me the chief good," said Stephen, piqued into argument.

"How, sir!" exclaimed an old gentleman with a fur cap "knowledge is power."

"A clap-trap of the day," quoth Stephen, scornfully "knowledge of what?"

"My heavens above!" muttered the elder, excitedly "why! knowledge of facts, sir!"

"And how many 'facts' are true?"

"Sir," said the old gentleman, impressively, "I have in my baggage a collection of earwigs. Will you tell me that their existence is not a fact? Why, I have just completed an essay on their dipterous parasites."

"Possibly. And then—what use are your discoveries?"

"Really, sir. Such a question! Why, they serve the cause of science."

"And the cause of science?"

"Serves the world," observed Lord Clancahir.

"Not my world."

"Why," broke forth the antique savant, "if it were not

for science, where would you be, sir, at this moment? Not going against wind and tide across the Atlantic."

"I should be exactly where I am—in myself." The naturalist turned on his heel and walked away, with the determined gait peculiar to landsmen on shipboard.

"That a man should occupy his mind with earwigs and their parasites!" murmured Stephen. "'Knowledge comes' with a vengeance."

Lord Clancabir looked up at Mr. Harley's pale worn face. "Are you in earnest?" he asked.

Stephen started, then hurriedly replied, "I believe I am." After a moment's thought he added, "Of course I mean knowledge of forms. Knowledge of essences is necessary; but that is gained by self-analysis."

"Not by observation of our fellow-men?"

"'Our hermit spirits dwell apart.' There is a sphere round each of us that no one can penetrate: we have each our own world." Herbert looked eagerly for Lord Clancabir's answer.

"In our present state of probation——" A sound of a sharp blow—then a splash—then a chorus of voices: "Man overboard—Throw him a rope—He has sunk—No he hasn't—The other is after him—Are the engines backed?—Well done—Why, he can't swim, either—Hurra! he has the rope—There's the boat now—They're all in."

"That's a fine young fellow," said the historiographer of earwigs, to an American who stood next him in the crowd.

"Well, sir, which?"

"Why, the young man that saved the others."

"Ah. I think the man that couldn't swim was the praiseworthy."

"By Jove!" quoth a third bystander; "they were a pair of fools not to wait for the boat: neither were of any use."

"Use!" repeated the American, disdainfully. "Who can judge of uses? Who can say with self-congratulation—arrogance that there was no greater usefulness in this man's deed than in all contrivances of pigdom of which we speak boastfully for evermore?" He pointed to the paddles of the steamer as he spoke; then, taking a volume of essays from his pocket, he walked with the air of a

"representative man" to the other end of the quarter-deck.

"Good heavens!" muttered the old gentleman, drawing a long breath; "what is the world come to?"

"To its dotage, sir," remarked a cynical young gentleman; "if it accepts such Boanerges as its prophets."

"How did it all happen?" inquired one lately risen from the cabin, in the "ocean-moan of *ennui*." "I'm always out of luck: I never come in for any excitement. Who jumped overboard after whom?"

"Mr. Herbert Erle of Erlesmere was knocked overboard by the recoil of a rope; Mr. Harley, not knowing how to swim, jumped after him; Lord Clancahir caught the infection, and followed. Two sailors and the smallest boat in the steamer picked them all up. There was much sublime folly shown by all parties."

"Indeed! sorry I did not see: was asleep in the cabin," yawned the last comer.

"You are, then, a friend of these gentlemen," inquired the entomologist, with a doubtful look.

"I am acquainted with their dressing-cases and despatch boxes, sir."

"Oh —"

"Erle of Erlesmere. Ah! knew an Erle at Eton: always heard his brother was weak in intellect or something."

"Poor fellow! he seemed a little deformed, too."

"By Jove!" drawled the *ennuyé*, languidly, "I wish I'd been up; 'twould have given me something to think about. Hallo! there's the breakfast bell, thank heaven!"



CHAPTER XVIII.

"D'autant es tu Dien, comme tu te recognois homme."—MONTAIGNE.

"Uomo sono, e mi prego

D'esser umano, e teco, che se 'uomo

O che più tosto esser dovresti, parlo

Di cosa umana, e se di cotal nome

Forse ti sdegni, guarda

Che nel disumanarti

Non divenghi una fera, anzi che un Dio."—GUARINI.

THE shock had, of course, affected Herbert: he lay in his cabin with closed eyes; not sleeping, but in a reverie,

Lord Clancahir stood near. Mr. Harley sat by Herbert's side, reading, as it seemed, intently; yet his book was but the second volume of a second-rate novel.

"You are better?" Lord Clancahir asked. "Yes."

"You have been thinking?" There was a pause; then slowly came the meaningful acquiescence,—“Yes.”

"I am going on deck for a while." He left the cabin. Herbert thought on:—Mr. Harley said never a word. Two hours passed: hours of conflict between the two, for all their silence. At last Herbert broke it.

"Stephen, why did you risk your life to save mine?"

"From impulse."

"Why have you sat by me so watchfully all day?"

"You were suffering: I could not leave you."

"My mind was very clear as I sank in the water: a thousand thoughts crowded into that moment."

"Well, Bertie, why do you look at me with such solemn eyes?"

"You say a man should condemn his manship."

"I believe so."

"I believe that by its perfecting alone shall we retrieve our lost godship."

"Why do you believe this?"

"It is a necessity to me."

"Possibly: my truth need not be yours."

"Why did you risk your life? Why do you watch over me with a mother's care?"

"To help and protect is divine."

"Sympathy and devotion are human, Stephen. I am content to be a man, and nothing more. It befits me to be lowly."

Mr. Harley thought for a while, and then he went on deck; and walked to and fro, while the stars came swarming up from the under-world, and the moon's thin crescent sank down to rest among the wave pillows. "Alas! that there should be that morbid humility," he thought, "in him who needs such self-reliance—such self-contentment. He can alone be happy, resting in his inherited divinity: his mortal part is but a poor possession. Strange that he should claim disappointment for his lot: he chooses the life which is but a long death, and refuses the present godship within his reach—the self-sufficingness

which is Deity!" Late in the summer night he went to see how Herbert was. At the door of his cabin he met Lord Clancahir: they passed with very formal greeting.

CHAPTER XIX.

"But who the knights in green, and what the train
Of ladies dressed with daisies on the plain?
Why both the bands in worship disagree,
And some adore the flower, and some the tree?"—**DRYDEN.**

THE rising grounds of Effingham still glowed with light, though the sun had sunk behind the dark, colourless woods of Erlesmere. Lady Effingham and Mildred walked in the terrace garden, and added their beauty to the scene. "Have you heard that poor Herbert and Mr. Harley came home last night?" Lady Effingham asked, as she stood with her daughter and watched the fountain spouting showers of rubies in the evening glow.

"Yes; I heard so. Lord Clancahir is with them, is he not?"

"Apparently; for here the trio come." Mildred turned and watched the advancing group.

"How very ill that poor boy looks, still, what a contrast to Lord Clancahir!" Mildred remained silent: she looked a little contemptuous. To feel contemptuous was too often her first impulse when her mother spoke.

"I wonder when Herbert intends to get rid of Mr. Harley," Lady Effingham continued. "I hope he will not establish himself at Erlesmere."

"Can that be Miss Effingham?" said Lord Clancahir, half to himself.

"She seems much improved," observed Stephen, sneeringly. "She has grown like her mother." Herbert repeated doubtfully, his eyes fixed on Mildred, "Like her mother."

Lady Effingham advanced with cordial aspect. "How glad I am to see you, Herbert," she said; "and you, Mr. Harley!" She pressed Lord Clancahir's hand affectionately. "You scarcely remember Mildred, Bertie;

you have been so long away." Herbert murmured some "nothings, nothing worth." He looked pale and ill. With insurmountable diffidence he drew back; while Lady Effingham and Lord Clancahir, Mr. Harley and Mildred, walked together towards the house. Stephen did not speak. Miss Effingham was not used to self-absorbed companions, and she looked up in surprise; her eyes rested on Mr. Harley's worn, thoughtful features with unexpected interest. She said with haste, to break his other-world reverie, "You have been long away." She could at the moment find no words of her own: she used her mother's.

"Yes; I find many things changed since we went."

"Improved, I hope." The slightest possible self-consciousness as she spoke, did not escape Mr. Harley: he glanced at her, and said quickly, "I hardly know yet."

"This garden has been finished; my mother's plans completed. All was in comparative confusion when you went."

"It is often pleasanter to think of what may be, than of what has been done."

"You mean that realization always disappoints."

"I never expect, so I avoid disappointment; but I hate finish, because it is always a monument of mortal incapacity to me."

A new feeling thrilled Mildred as she listened. There was a conflict in her mind whether she should dislike or admire this uncivil, ill-dressed thinker,—this elderly dogmatist. She did not know; but meantime she wished to hear him speak again, so she replied, "Why hate finish? It gives in any case a seeming perfection."

Mr. Harley thought it worth while to look at her large grey eyes, lighted up by her thoughts,—thoughts original, not gleaned from the last Review. "'Seeming!' Exactly. And you would be content with shams!" Mildred thought rebelliously of the life of shams she lived, but she did not speak her thought. In fact, 'twas an event in her young lady life to have said so much of "things real." The clang of the gong for dressing angrily interrupted Lady Effingham's suavities, as she stood at the drawing-room door that opened to the terrace. "Harry has gone to an agricultural dinner at Holmvale," she explained, "or we should have

insisted on your dining with us; but you will come to-morrow?"

"Erle has engaged himself to start with me for Ireland to-morrow."

"That is but a bad excuse. Bertie, you will come to-morrow, and bring Lord Clancahir with you: and Mr. Harley, you are not going to Ireland?" The old glamour was on Herbert: he stammeringly consented, so Lord Clancahir and Mr. Harley were constrained to the same. Then Lady Effingham and her daughter retreated. The last ray of sunshine left the terrace, and Herbert and his guests struck home through the summer woods.

"Miss Effingham is beautiful," Lord Clancahir said, after they had walked in silence awhile; but he spoke without enthusiasm.

"Like her mother," observed Mr. Harley.

"Like her mother," Herbert repeated, vaguely.

"Do you remember Sign?" asked Stephen.

"Who is Sign?" inquired Lord Clancahir.

"An old bug-a-boo of Herbert's childhood, to whom we used to give a deep significance."

"You often startled me, Stephen; I did not understand your meaning."

"Which was——?" asked Lord Clancahir.

"That all of us are haunted by signs and shams," broke out Mr. Harley, "until a world-educated man becomes a mere image-worshipper."

"But how is this *à propos* of Miss Effingham? She looked to me a quiet, well-dressed young lady, nothing more."

"You have described her. Well-dressed; well-mannered; well-looking; an altogether well got-up sham: a Sign, Bertie."

Lord Clancahir said with the least possible smile: "Really!" Then followed a silence, somewhat sulky, as does when men disagree without choosing to discuss. "We go to Ireland the day after to-morrow, then?" observed Lord Clancahir.

"The day after to-morrow, certainly," replied Herbert with emphasis, as if to bind himself to himself.

"There are some business forms to be attended to when you return," observed Mr. Harley.

"I half wish I were not twenty-one: I ought to do so much."

"And you will do it," said Lord Clancahir.

"Don't *do* much," interposed Stephen. "Don't follow the prevalent fashion. What consequence is it whether you grow fat farmers on your estate or not?"

"Work for some end, be it ever so slowly;
Cherish some flower, be it ever so lowly:"

quoted Lord Clancahir, in a low voice. "We will start for Cahirmore on Friday, Erle. My time for work has also come."

Herbert looked wistfully at Stephen. "I shall return in a fortnight, Steenie."

"Identity changes in a fortnight," muttered Mr. Harley.

CHAPTER XX.

"How fiery and forward our pedant is! He kills her in her own humour."—SHAKESPEARE.

"MILLY, do you know that is a very ugly gown?" said Lady Effingham, as her daughter came into the drawing-room before dinner the following day. Mildred did not reply. She took up a volume of Shelley's poems which lay on the table. Sir Harry never read verses, or it would not have been there: he did not even read the articles on poetry in the Quarterly, or it would have been thrown into the fire.

"Do you hear, Mildred?"

"Yes."

"Why do you not pay attention? What are you reading?"

"Epipsychidion."

"I do not like your always poring over Shelley: he is not orthodox."

"What does that signify!" exclaimed Miss Effingham, impatiently. Lady Effingham turned, and looked at her daughter with some surprise. "Put that book down, Mildred, and go upstairs and change your dress for that you wore yesterday." The words were uttered in a low

sweet voice, which might have appropriately conveyed the tenderest praise. Sullenly Miss Effingham obeyed the order. It is no exaggeration to say that her eyes glared like those of some caged animal: her lips were white from compression. When she returned, after five minutes' absence, her heightened colour and slightly dilated nostrils added to the half defiance which always characterised her manner.

Sir Harry sat reading the debates of the preceding evening. "Two minutes late," he said peevishly: "but that boy was never in time."

"Have you seen him?" Lady Effingham asked.

"Of course: he was here this morning—as great a ninny as ever; Harley as great a pedant."

"I thought poor Bertie improved."

"He will be 'poor Bertie' all his life. Now, Cecil—"

"Mr. Erle, Lord Clancahir, Mr. Harley," were announced by a servant.

Herbert was improved: his slight deformity was scarcely perceptible; his look of habitual suffering was now characterised by an expression of gentleness rather than of querulousness, as had been the case in his youth; better health had given sheen to his light brown hair; his dress was arranged with attention. A certain grace pervaded all his movements: though often hurried and nervous, he was never awkward. He was pale, and his features were irregular and insignificant; yet no one could think him disagreeable-looking: his well-shaped head and meditative eyes redeemed him from the charge of ugliness. "How exactly the same those three men are to what they were five years ago," observed Lady Effingham, as she left the dining-room with Mildred.

"Herbert is more like other people than he was."

"And Mr. Harley, perhaps, less. I think he is almost insufferable: so very rude. You must keep him at a distance, Milly: he said some odd things to you at dinner. Neither he nor Bertie will be pleasant neighbours, I fear. I wish——" Coffee came; her wish remained unexpressed.

"I am sorry Lord Clancahir goes to-morrow; one can talk to him: he is just as nice as he used to be. Certainly, Cecil chooses very creditable friends."

"You heard from him this morning?"

"Yes, from Innsbruck. He talks of wintering in Vienna. He is a charming correspondent: I don't know any one so clever. He tells me, that if there is a change of government, Lord Waltham has offered him his private secretaryship."

"So he has given up the bar?"

"I dare say he will be called, just to give him a qualification for some place; but I should think Cecil looked to Parliament. He ought to be pretty sure of Holmvale, if your father and Bertie give him their support; poor Bertie, of course, will not care to sit for it himself."

"Probably not," said Mr. Harley, who had entered the room unperceived, and now stood near the table examining the books which lay upon it.

For once Lady Effingham looked unequivocally angry. She murmured "Too ungentlemanlike;" but, quickly recovering herself, she added in softest accents, and confidentially: "Do you not agree with me, Mr. Harley, that poor Bertie is scarcely likely to undertake the fatigue of committees and all the work of the House?"

"I should think not, madam."

"I think I will go out on the terrace," observed Lady Effingham, bored by his impenetrable manner. "You must not come, Milly; you have a cold." A book lay prominently on the table, bound in green velvet, with gold clasps and lock. On it were the initials "M. E.," and it was labelled "Manuscript."

"Yours, Miss Effingham?" Stephen asked.

"Yes."

"Why is the book locked?"

"What is in it is not worth reading."

"Then why did you write?" Mildred felt rather indignant. She said hastily: "Why do the birds sing?"

"And publish a collection of their compositions, bound in green and gold."

"My mother gave me the book," said Mildred, almost the first time in her life abashed and shy. Stephen Harley seemed to read her through and through: he was brusque and uncivil. She felt compelled to be candid with him, or who could tell what he might say. Hitherto she had played the part of startling others by her brilliant con-

before them, bounded by a rugged chain of mountains, behind whose black crags the red sun was setting. Floods of amethyst light streamed between the castellated summits upon the rich lowland at their feet. In the foreground, some large Scotch firs and larches, on either side the road, stood up thunder-stricken and black in the shade of the opening cliffs. Herbert was silent. Lord Clancahir, after a long earnest look, drew his hat lower down over his eyes, and impatiently ordered the carman to drive on. He seemed to understand that he was to say no more: Irishmen are always quick to perceive the mood of others. Half-an-hour's drive through woodland interspersed with patches of tillage brought them to the park entrance. An old woman stumbled to the gate: she was slow in opening it. Lord Clancahir sprung off the car to help her. There was a cry of recognition: she seized his hand, and poured forth a thousand blessings.

"Didn't she speak Irish?" asked Herbert.

"Yes: she could not readily have found so many affectionate expressions in English."

"You know Irish?"

"Slightly; but I am accustomed to hear what she said: to be told that I am the pulse of her heart."

"What exaggeration!"

"Not at the moment; but our feelings ebb and flow rapidly."

"That is, I suppose, the reason why the Irish so seldom succeed."

"Do we seldom succeed?"

"Why, it's the fashion to say so. Ireland is behind the age."

"*This* age of coal and iron, railways and spinning jennies; but we are also before the age. We contribute the most part of the little art that manages to exist in England: our sculptors are world-known; our ——" With a last flourish, the gallant blood-horse dashed up to the Greek portico of Cahirmore House. Its pillars were of Egyptian granite; the proportion of the façade perfect.

"My dear son!" exclaimed a tall and very graceful lady, who came hastily to meet Lord Clancahir. He introduced Herbert to his mother: she received him with grave and rather formal kindness. They entered the hall: many

would have called it cold-looking and comfortless. Two or three marble statues occupied niches; some handsome vases and antiques were arranged on pedestals.

"I expected you yesterday," said Lady Clancahir.

"I waited for Erle: he has seen much of the world; I wished him to know Ireland."

Lady Clancahir was strikingly like her son: the same refined straight features; the same calmness of manner; but the same searching dark eye and mobile lips and nostril, which told that thunder-storms might arise in the serene atmosphere. She led the way through two-echoing and, to an English eye, but scantily furnished rooms. Beautiful in their proportion, crowded with pictures and statuettes, yet empty of the thousand nameless accessories which give a look of homeness to an English drawing-room. Even in Lady Clancahir's private sitting-room, to which she brought her son and his friend, this air was wanting. Two or three pictures admirably placed, cabinets crowded with cameos and miniatures, some Sèvres china, and a few well-read books, were the first objects that struck the eye. A grey wolf-hound rose slowly from the Persian carpet before the fire-place, and looked doubtfully at the strangers. Herbert grew every moment more shy in Lady Clancahir's presence. There was a formality, a certain degree of stateliness in the atmosphere, which was unlike any he had yet been in. How different from Effingham! from the comfort, the general feeling of *bien être*, of which a visitor there was conscious the moment he entered Lady Effingham's presence. Nothing struck him more than the total absence of perfume, of sound, of all that betokened life, at Cahirmore: it was to Effingham as a statue to a water-colour painting. The gong for dressing startled him, breaking the solemn atmosphere with its impatient anger. "How different all this is from what I expected," he said to Lord Clancahir, as they went to their rooms; "but this is not Irish!"

"Not Anglo-Irish perhaps."

Herbert walked to the window when his friend left him. A wooded plain stretched out to the chain of mountains he had already seen; now rising in the dusk like a ruined wall, shutting out the orange evening light. In the foreground was a stately terrace garden well kept, well planned; yet who could compare its stiff and disciplined

flowers to the luxuriant beauty, the gorgeous colouring, the artistic arrangement of Lady Effingham's *parterre*. Herbert sighed. He was an Englishman : he loved comfort ; æsthetic as well as domestic comfort. He rang the bell for his servant : the rope was of embroidered silk, but it did not fulfil its office ; he pulled it impatiently, and it fell. When his servant came, he remarked,

"I am told, sir, dinner won't be served for more than half an hour."

"Lord Clancahir said eight o'clock was the hour."

"It is said to be so, sir."

"Very true," said Herbert, meditatively. "This is improved Orientalism, I suppose. I wonder if unpunctuality is a Semitic virtue."



CHAPTER XXII.

"T'venni in luogo d'ogni luce muto,
Che mugghia, come fa mar per tempesta,
Se da contrari venti è combattuto.
La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,
Mena gli spiriti con la sua rapina,
Voltando, e percotendo gli molesta."—DANTE.

A GENTLEMAN stood at the fireless fire-place of the drawing-room when Herbert re-entered it : a youngish man,—well looking, chestnut haired and broad shouldered, but with a manner marked in turns by *mauvaise honte* and assumption. He looked uncomfortable when Herbert made some trifling observation. It was a relief when Lord Clancahir came in, for Herbert was shy and ignorant of society.

"How is your farm doing, Manly ?" he asked, after the first greeting.

"Oh ! as well as can be expected in such a country."

"You have good land."

"Excellent ; but the people ! liars and thieves."

"Ah ! Allow me to introduce Mr. Erle ; he is a stranger in Ireland."

"You will find the lower orders here regular savages," he said to Herbert. "I really don't know what is to improve them."

"What do you call improvement?" Lord Clancahir asked.

"My dear fellow, no one knows better than you do how everything in Ireland is upside down. The people like all that is most wrong and wretched: they have no self-respect, no desire to become civilized."

"After the northern fashion. Perhaps not." Mr. Manly stared; but Irish faults were a favourite topic: he ran on.

"No honesty! Now, I have a tenant who owes me two years' rent; a fifty-acre farmer. I rode over to see him, and he gave me a roast turkey and a bottle of sherry for luncheon. Conceive!"

"Such hospitality!" added Lord Clancahir.

"This same fellow is very popular: a repeal warden and priest's man. I brought an action at quarter sessions against him for occupation of a bog he has no right to, and the jury sent in a verdict for him against the opinion of the judge!" Lord Clancahir shrugged his shoulders.

"What can you expect?"

"What, indeed! Trial by jury is not fit for these savages."

"The Mosaic law, or even the precepts of the Koran, might be better suited to them," said Lord Clancahir, gravely.

"I dare say," replied the Anglo-Irishman, with scorn: "they are not fit for the freedom of Englishmen."

Dinner was announced. Lady Clancahir appeared—formal and stately as before, yet graceful, even in her matronhood, as a gazelle. The dining-room was in keeping with the rest of the house. The walls were painted in fresco, the furniture was of velvet; yet Herbert could not avoid a thought of Effingham as he sat down before the handsome antique equipage, but unscientifically cooked meats, on the dinner-table of Cahirmore. Mr. Manly talked fluently of Irish politics, Irish statistics, Irish disgraces. Lord Clancahir smiled gravely at some of his assertions, but left most of them unnoticed. His mother was silent; and Mr. Erle shy and constrained. Herbert half felt as if Mr. Manly were the last link connecting him with English habits of thought: he talked in the same strain as the one or two books on Ireland which Herbert had read. In severe language, he catalogued the national sins. Herbert grew every moment more indignant, more astonished. *Superstition, bigotry, falsehood, cruelty, murder,*

versation, her flashes of genius; now she was startled herself. "Will you open it for me?"

"Yes."

"I suppose every one reads in it who likes?"

"No one without my leave."

"And your leave?"

"Is often withheld." Mildred half wondered to herself why it was given in this instance,—given to this uncourteous, pragmatic man, who had nothing to recommend him, and whom she began to fear and half dislike. He opened the book, but before he had read a stanza the other gentlemen came in. Sir Harry asked for music. "Where is Lady Effingham?" he inquired.

"She is on the terrace."

"Too late for her. Clancahir, will you tell her we are here. Mildred, sing." He gave the order in much the same tone as he would have commanded a regiment to fire. She sang energetically, for she was still angry with Mr. Harley: her voice was a powerful contralto well trained, yet she sang with more brilliancy than expression. Herbert stood behind her: he gazed on her soft chestnut hair, her rounded shoulders and arms, her small graceful head: her singing became to him what a well-managed background should be to a portrait—not a distinct fact, but rather an accessory. When she had done, he did not feel inclined to thank her for her song: he might as well have thanked her for the perfume of her hair.

"That is incomprehensible music, Mildred; sing something Italian," Sir Harry said, from behind the *Times*. Schubert did not harmonise somehow with its columns.

"'Pirate's grave,'" muttered Mr. Harley, turning over the leaves of the green book, "'Brutus, a Play;,' 'Ode to the Albatross;,' 'Orpheus and Eurydice;,' 'Raby Place;,' Tennyson is the last favourite apparently, 'bitter black;'"

"She knows the grace of that new eloquence,
In epithets to join two words in one,
Forsooth, for adjectives can't stand alone."

He pushed the book from him, not even restoring it to its place of honour, due to the velvet and gold, if not to the contents. Leaning back in his chair, he fell a-thinking. From the piano, Mildred saw his indifference to her poetical efforts.

"You are singing out of tune, Milly," said Lady Effingham, who came in at the moment, followed by Lord Clancahir. Miss Effingham concluded abruptly.

"Pray sing another verse, that we may recover the effect of your wrong note in the last one," Lady Effingham continued. Mildred passed on to another song.

"Sing what your mother desired," Sir Harry commanded. It was done. The notes came full, clear, and rich. The effect was magnificent. "Thank you, Milly; that is charming." It was Miss Effingham's revenge, when she was indignant, to do whatever she was about peculiarly well. It was a triumph over those who thwarted her,—an assertion of her superiority. She rose from the piano with heightened beauty. Herbert placed a chair for her.—Lord Clancahir seemed to wish for conversation.—She had had a *succès*. But Stephen looked unconscious of her approach to the table. She had expected an uncourteous criticism of her verses; she was vexed at his indifference. What business had he to be indifferent when she had allowed him to look through them! She entered into a clever touch-and-go war of words with Lord Clancahir, made several startling observations, maintained all manner of paradoxes, and, among a great many fathom speeches, said some witty ones. Herbert sat silent, rather overpowered by her rapidity of thought. Lady Effingham grounded a strip of work, pleased, on the whole, at Mildred's brilliancy: she liked her daughter to succeed, and Lord Clancahir was evidently interested. As for the meaning or tendency of what she said, that mattered little, so long as it told well on her audience. "It is eleven o'clock; Bertie," said Mr. Harley, when at length there was a pause; "you start early to-morrow." There was unmistakeable bore in his tone of voice. Mildred shook hands with Lord Clancahir and Herbert: she bowed slightly as she wished Stephen good night.

"We will walk home," said Herbert, as he buttoned his overcoat in the hall. "It is a fine night."

"We shall have a fine passage, Erle," said Lord Clancahir, "if this weather lasts."

"Excellent," said Herbert, absently.

"We shall get to Cahirmore the day after to-morrow."

"Shall we?"

"I have not seen my mother for more than a year."

"Your mother?"

"You talk as if you were in a mesmeric trance."

"I beg your pardon," said Herbert, suddenly awaking from a reverie.

"There is a cold dew," interrupted Mr. Harley; "let us walk faster. Herbert, I depend on you not to stay over your fortnight's leave of absence."

"Certainly not," he replied; "certainly not," he repeated, gravely. "Clancahir, you will return to England with me?"

"I am not sure. It is time for me to assume my Sheikdom; my mother wishes it; my people look for me."



CHAPTER XXI.

"Freedom, says the sage, will lead to prosperity, and despotism to destruction. Yet has this land been regulated by every form of government that the ingenuity of man has devised."

"Is there then no hope?"

"The law that regulates man must be founded on a knowledge of his nature, or that law leads him to ruin. What is the nature of man? In every clime and in every creed we shall find a new definition."—DISRAELI.

"I THOUGHT these ideas of your Eastern origin had been exploded as fabulous," said Herbert to Lord Clancahir.

"National fable is only another word for national tradition. However, I am not speaking of tradition, but of the still apparent traces of our Asian origin. Don't come to Ireland and look on us as inferior Englishmen, but as a people apart. You don't abuse the Arabs for eating pillau with their fingers: why not allow us to do the same with our potatoes in peace. 'For Paddy is not undeveloped John, but diverse.'"

The young men leaned against the bulwark of the Bristol steamer as she wound through the serpentine curves of the river Suir. "It might be England for aught I can see as yet."

"It might. The climate is not un-English, except for a little more rain; the laws are English; and there is an incessant infusion of English manners and customs; yet

nothing changes our inherent Orientalism; you will see for yourself."

"That is Waterford, I suppose," said Herbert, as a turn in the river brought in sight an ancient round fort with a conical roof, a long handsome quay, some twenty or thirty merchant craft, and, beyond them, a many-arched bridge.

"Remember we are improved Asiatics, not degraded Saxons," said Lord Clancahir, as the steamer bumped against the landing-place. Groups of idle ragged young men, and a mob of both sexes, surrounded Herbert as he stepped from the gangway. Children seemed to grow on the backs of the black-haired swarthy women; most of them carried two, and others clung by their streaming blue cloaks. Offers of help, advice, jokes, flatteries, mutual abuse, rose so thick and fast from the crowd, that the several items of the din were undistinguishable. Lord Clancahir threw some sixpences in a different direction to that he wanted to follow. There was a rush to the spot; the locality of the sixpences was in a second marked by the whirl of human beings round it. "Bucksheesh," he observed with a smile, as he disengaged himself from the swarm. A string of Irish cars came clattering along the broad quay; the drivers quickly opened for themselves a passage with their whips, and seemed little careful whether they ran over the humans in the way, or not. Long guttural curses sounded on every side; looks of hatred and revenge were interchanged: the aspect of affairs was stormy. Herbert thought of faction fights and Irish murders: he looked grave,—half anxious for his own safety, half compassionating the barbarians. "There is nothing to pity," said Lord Clancahir.

"I say, you fellow with the chestnut mare, how long shall you be going to Cahirmore?"

"Three hours, your honour."

"I'll do it in two and a half," said another.

"I'll engage you both: we'll see which keeps his word. Get up, Erle; the servants and luggage will have the other car."

"How far is it?" asked Herbert.

"Twenty miles."

"This horse can't take us surely?"

"He'd go from this to Dublin without stopping, your

honour." Herbert smiled. The little beast did not fill the two or three straps which formed the harness; the shafts moved up and down at every step; sometimes their points were higher than the horse's ears.

"Your honour will sit a little forward; the belly band is bad." They started in a canter: it was some moments before Herbert grew used to the motion.

"We do not study comfort, Erle," said Lord Clancahir. "I think it is to our credit. What an expression: to 'study comfort!'"

"Apparently not," said Herbert, as they passed a group of peasants.

It was a hot summer evening, and the sun shone fiercely upon the blue cloth cloaks and heavy long coats, almost trailing on the ground, which they wore. "The organ of veneration is stronger than that of self-indulgence. It is the dress of their fathers."

"That's the living truth, your honour," exclaimed the carman, energetically; and he galloped the well-bred little horse up a hill. They passed a village: a long street straggling down one hill and up another. There were some tall slated houses at one end, but they were much out of repair: several of their windows were broken and mended with paper; two or three sashes were blocked up entirely: they looked untenanted. Before the doors of the mud huts at their side played dozens of children, untroubled by any plurality of garments: one short tunic of brown or blue calico served them for covering. While the horse was drinking some meal and water, Lord Clancahir and Herbert strolled into a cabin, over the door of which was written in red letters, "Entertainment for man and horse." Opposite was a small shop, in the window of which soap and bread, tobacco and candles, were heterogeneously mingled. "Commercial mart!" exclaimed Herbert, looking at the board overhead.

"Why not? We always choose the finest sounding words we can."

"But they don't apply: it's a burlesque."

"Very true. Englishmen always find much that is burlesque in Ireland. If a horse were to sit on its hind legs, and try to bark like a dog, the effect would be *absurd*: not more so than we Irish are. We have been

beaten and spurred until we make awkward attempts to give the paw, fetch and carry, and do all the tricks of your well-bred mastiff."

"Without imitating its honesty and fidelity."

"Possibly not. Yet a horse in its native state can be taught anything by affection: besides, it will carry its master, and do him a thousand services."

"Be his slave: the dog is his companion."

"Yet who shall say that it was not as well to create the one as the other?"

Herbert could scarcely stand upright in the cabin which professed to entertain men and horses; the air was heavy with smoke; there was no ventilation, and little light. A fit of coughing seized him; he did not recover breath till he and his friend were again on their car, springing up the hill in a canter. "Our mastiffs have better kennels than your horses have stables," he said.

"Large houses and thorough draughts are not enjoined by any morality. Supposing we do like warmth, and cannot afford calorifers; what then? Herbert hardly knew what to expect at Cahirmore, his friend so praised the bad habits of the people. The country grew wilder as they drove on. Bits of heather made purple spots by the roadside; and the foxglove grew as if there were no children near to gather its crimson bells. The road wound through cliffs, here and there bared by an earth-slip, or lighted where a gleaming streamlet came leaping down their sides. The sun had left the depths of the glen, which looked grey and dark, but crimsoned the summits of the rocks above them.

"Ten minutes will bring us within sight of Cahirmore," said Lord Clancahir. "We shall be in time for the sunset."

"The next turn, your honour: your lordship's entirely welcome to these parts. It is a sunny day for your tenantry." The car rattled on; the cliffs rose steeper, till they overhung the road; the black pools of a trout stream by their side grew undefined, and glimmered mysteriously in the grey shadow.

"There it is," exclaimed the driver; and, with a sense of the beauty of the scene, he drew up his horse abruptly. A wooded valley, some five or six miles in breadth, lay

before them, bounded by a rugged chain of mountains, behind whose black crags the red sun was setting. Floods of amethyst light streamed between the castellated summits upon the rich lowland at their feet. In the foreground, some large Scotch firs and larches, on either side the road, stood up thunder-stricken and black in the shade of the opening cliffs. Herbert was silent. Lord Clancahir, after a long earnest look, drew his hat lower down over his eyes, and impatiently ordered the carman to drive on. He seemed to understand that he was to say no more: Irishmen are always quick to perceive the mood of others. Half-an-hour's drive through woodland interspersed with patches of tillage brought them to the park entrance. An old woman stumbled to the gate: she was slow in opening it. Lord Clancahir sprung off the car to help her. There was a cry of recognition: she seized his hand, and poured forth a thousand blessings.

"Didn't she speak Irish?" asked Herbert.

"Yes: she could not readily have found so many affectionate expressions in English."

"You know Irish?"

"Slightly; but I am accustomed to hear what she said: to be told that I am the pulse of her heart."

"What exaggeration!"

"Not at the moment; but our feelings ebb and flow rapidly."

"That is, I suppose, the reason why the Irish so seldom succeed."

"Do we seldom succeed?"

"Why, it's the fashion to say so. Ireland is behind the age."

"*This* age of coal and iron, railways and spinning jennies; but we are also before the age. We contribute the most part of the little art that manages to exist in England: our sculptors are world-known; our ——" With a last flourish, the gallant blood-horse dashed up to the Greek portico of Cahirmore House. Its pillars were of Egyptian granite; the proportion of the façade perfect.

"My dear son!" exclaimed a tall and very graceful lady, who came hastily to meet Lord Clancahir. He introduced Herbert to his mother: she received him with grave *and rather formal* kindness. They entered the hall: many

would have called it cold-looking and comfortless. Two or three marble statues occupied niches; some handsome vases and antiques were arranged on pedestals.

"I expected you yesterday," said Lady Clancahir.

"I waited for Erle: he has seen much of the world; I wished him to know Ireland."

Lady Clancahir was strikingly like her son: the same refined straight features; the same calmness of manner; but the same searching dark eye and mobile lips and nostril, which told that thunder-storms might arise in the serene atmosphere. She led the way through two-echoing and, to an English eye, but scantily furnished rooms. Beautiful in their proportion, crowded with pictures and statuettes, yet empty of the thousand nameless accessories which give a look of homeness to an English drawing-room. Even in Lady Clancahir's private sitting-room, to which she brought her son and his friend, this air was wanting. Two or three pictures admirably placed, cabinets crowded with cameos and miniatures, some Sèvres china, and a few well-read books, were the first objects that struck the eye. A grey wolf-hound rose slowly from the Persian carpet before the fire-place, and looked doubtfully at the strangers. Herbert grew every moment more shy in Lady Clancahir's presence. There was a formality, a certain degree of stateliness in the atmosphere, which was unlike any he had yet been in. How different from Effingham! from the comfort, the general feeling of *bien être*, of which a visitor there was conscious the moment he entered Lady Effingham's presence. Nothing struck him more than the total absence of perfume, of sound, of all that betokened life, at Cahirmore: it was to Effingham as a statue to a water-colour painting. The gong for dressing startled him, breaking the solemn atmosphere with its impatient anger. "How different all this is from what I expected," he said to Lord Clancahir, as they went to their rooms; "but this is not Irish!"

"Not Anglo-Irish perhaps."

Herbert walked to the window when his friend left him. A wooded plain stretched out to the chain of mountains he had already seen; now rising in the dusk like a ruined wall, shutting out the orange evening light. In the foreground was a stately terrace garden well kept, well planned; yet who could compare its stiff and disciplined

flowers to the luxuriant beauty, the gorgeous colouring, the artistic arrangement of Lady Effingham's *parterre*. Herbert sighed. He was an Englishman : he loved comfort ; æsthetic as well as domestic comfort. He rang the bell for his servant : the rope was of embroidered silk, but it did not fulfil its office ; he pulled it impatiently, and it fell. When his servant came, he remarked,

"I am told, sir, dinner won't be served for more than half an hour."

"Lord Clancahir said eight o'clock was the hour."

"It is said to be so, sir."

"Very true," said Herbert, meditatively. "This is improved Orientalism, I suppose. I wonder if unpunctuality is a Semitic virtue."

CHAPTER XXII.

"T'venni in luogo d'ogni luce muto,
 Che mugghia, come fa mar per tempesta,
 Se da contrari venti è combattuto.
 La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,
 Mena gli spiriti con la sua rapina,
 Voltando, e percotendo gli molesta."—DANTE.

A GENTLEMAN stood at the fireless fire-place of the drawing-room when Herbert re-entered it : a youngish man,—well looking, chestnut haired and broad shouldered, but with a manner marked in turns by *mauvaise honte* and assumption. He looked uncomfortable when Herbert made some trifling observation. It was a relief when Lord Clancahir came in, for Herbert was shy and ignorant of society.

"How is your farm doing, Manly ?" he asked, after the first greeting.

"Oh ! as well as can be expected in such a country."

"You have good land."

"Excellent ; but the people ! liars and thieves."

"Ah ! Allow me to introduce Mr. Erle ; he is a stranger in Ireland."

"You will find the lower orders here regular savages," he said to Herbert. "I really don't know what is to improve them."

"What do you call improvement ?" Lord Clancahir asked.

"My dear fellow, no one knows better than you do how everything in Ireland is upside down. The people like all that is most wrong and wretched: they have no self-respect, no desire to become civilized."

"After the northern fashion. Perhaps not." Mr. Manly stared; but Irish faults were a favourite topic: he ran on.

"No honesty! Now, I have a tenant who owes me two years' rent; a fifty-acre farmer. I rode over to see him, and he gave me a roast turkey and a bottle of sherry for luncheon. Conceive!"

"Such hospitality!" added Lord Clancahir.

"This same fellow is very popular: a repeal warden and priest's man. I brought an action at quarter sessions against him for occupation of a bog he has no right to, and the jury sent in a verdict for him against the opinion of the judge!" Lord Clancahir shrugged his shoulders.

"What can you expect?"

"What, indeed! Trial by jury is not fit for these savages."

"The Mosaic law, or even the precepts of the Koran, might be better suited to them," said Lord Clancahir, gravely.

"I dare say," replied the Anglo-Irishman, with scorn: "they are not fit for the freedom of Englishmen."

Dinner was announced. Lady Clancahir appeared—formal and stately as before, yet graceful, even in her matronhood, as a gazelle. The dining-room was in keeping with the rest of the house. The walls were painted in fresco, the furniture was of velvet; yet Herbert could not avoid a thought of Effingham as he sat down before the handsome antique equipage, but unscientifically cooked meats, on the dinner-table of Cahirmore. Mr. Manly talked fluently of Irish politics, Irish statistics, Irish disgraces. Lord Clancahir smiled gravely at some of his assertions, but left most of them unnoticed. His mother was silent; and Mr. Erle shy and constrained. Herbert half felt as if Mr. Manly were the last link connecting him with English habits of thought: he talked in the same strain as the one or two books on Ireland which Herbert had read. In severe language, he catalogued the national sins. Herbert grew every moment more indignant, more astonished. Superstition, bigotry, falsehood, cruelty, murder,

perjury, theft, treachery—all the vices of the least civilized savage—were proved to be universal. As to the lesser vices, want of thrift and cleanliness, unpunctuality and indolence, they became lost in the enormity of the greater crimes. Still Lord Clancahir listened with a smile, in which was no little contempt; his mother with *ennui*.

"What a people!" exclaimed Herbert, in a low voice, to his friend, as they passed through the hall to Lady Clancahir's room.

"I am one of them," replied Lord Clancahir, proudly.

"Yes; but you are——"

"Guilty of all the crimes which are so odious—possibly, in Manly's eyes."

"Nonsense, Clancahir!"

"Irish virtues are 'sweet bells jangled out of tune.' However sweet the natural tones, they make painful discord under their present handling. Manly's list of crimes, read otherwise, might, by an easy transition, be called religion, devotion, subtlety, courage."

"But murder, treachery! Clancahir."

"Say the worst—we are lawless."

"The worst you can say," interrupted Herbert.

"As regards Anglo-Saxon rules," continued Lord Clancahir.

"Better they than none."

"A people under the laws of another race is as unnatural an anomaly as red hair on a Nubian."

"He can dye it."

"And renew the operation at every growth. Rather an apt illustration of English government of Ireland—a new quackery every time the last is found effectless."

"But these are questions of moral law, Clancahir," persevered Herbert.

"Few nations possess a purer moral law, or obey it better, than the Irish."

"Then why their reputation for crime?"

"Our crimes are relative, not positive. If there were no alien law they would be, perhaps, in a smaller proportion to our numbers than is usual."

"Yet Mr. Manly says—the statistics of crime——"

"Statistics are hieroglyphics—few have a key to their

import: the figure 100 'agrarian outrages,' is as likely to mean a hundred virtues as a hundred crimes."

"Pray do not talk politics," said Lady Clancahir, gently. "Tell me of your travels, Clancahir." He gave a vivid sketch of his tour in America. There was great charm in his language; words were not impediments to the expression of thought, but seemed rather to add beauty to his subtle ideas. Eleven o'clock arrived, Lady Clancahir's hour for retiring. "How fast the evening has passed," exclaimed Herbert: a commonplace, but earnestly said. Mr. Manly scarcely agreed; two hours of conversation, untinged by politics or party crimination, was to him waste of time.

"I suppose you will show Mr. Erle some of the scenery in the neighbourhood to-morrow," said he, as he wished Lord Clancahir good night.

"I will show him some of the people."

"Come and see my new village, it is less savage than most: I have done something."

"We will," replied Lord Clancahir; "see the Arab horses sitting on their hind legs," he added, when Mr. Manly was gone.

At breakfast next morning he told his plans to his mother. "I have got to attend sessions before luncheon," he said. "Will you drive Erle over to Manly's farm, mother? I will meet you there at three." Lady Clancahir looked a little disappointed, a little shy, but she hastily agreed to her son's proposition.

"How very un-Irish!" thought Herbert, as he followed her to her sitting-room, which she had placed at his disposal, "her reserve, her stately grace, her quiet manner!"

There were not many books on the tables. None of the serials, the new novels, the caricatures of the day, which were heaped on the drawing-room tables at Effingham; none of the Tedesque school of poets, with their minute anatomy of the passions that underlie modern society, charming to talk about for those who have never felt them, fearfully exciting to those who are their victims.

"Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse."

An old excuse, not less needed in this than in the fourteenth century. We will not catalogue the books on Lad-

perjury, theft, treachery—all the vices of the least civilized savage—were proved to be universal. As to the lesser vices, want of thrift and cleanliness, unpunctuality and indolence, they became lost in the enormity of the greater crimes. Still Lord Clancahir listened with a smile, in which was no little contempt; his mother with *ennui*.

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"Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse."

An old excuse, not less needed in this than in the fourteenth century. We will not catalogue the books on Lady

Clancahir's table; if we did, a false impression of her would surely be given to those who think that a weak and ignorant mind is necessary to true womanhood. Had Lady Effingham liked the books Lady Clancahir did, she would not have suffered them on her table. One or two Herbert recognized as favourites of Mr. Harley's: he silently looked through their pages. Lady Clancahir watched him shyly. A silence grew in the room, which was hard to break.

"Stephen says," exclaimed Herbert, suddenly lighting on a manuscript note in the book he was looking through—"I beg your pardon," he added, colouring; "I mean my guardian, Mr. Harley."

"Yes?" asked Lady Clancahir, with interest.

"Stephen says," repeated Herbert, with hasty anxiety, "that every man is solitary; the creator of his circumstance. You write here—'The law of family marks the human race: it is the first form of government authorized by Divine wisdom. A man who pretends to stand alone, sins against his nature: to do so is a crime as well as a mistake. There is mental as well as physical relationship: we can as badly do without the first as the last.'"
He looked up earnestly; there was a moment's silence. "Is it true? it has always seemed so," he said, hurriedly.

"I think one feels that it is," replied Lady Clancahir, simply.

"Feels," echoed Herbert doubtfully; "can one trust one's feelings?"

"Rather than one's opinions."

"Do you think," asked Herbert, earnestly and hurriedly, looking straight into Lady Clancahir's countenance; "do you think that the highest aim for a man is to subdue his humanity in order to attain the divinity he longs for?" He used almost Mr. Harley's words.

"Why need he? humanity and divinity are now equivalent. In the first we attain the second: both are fused in the one word, Christianity."

That morning was an epoch in Herbert's life. Lady Clancahir's words were the expression of unuttered thoughts, over which he had long brooded in troubled doubt. What *she* and her son, who thought with her, became to *him* in consequence, will be known by those of my readers who

have found sympathy and brotherhood after years of suffering loneliness; by those who for long years have heard of Christianity, without knowing its significance, until a word reveals it. We look on the utterer of that word as inspired: he is more to us than all other men.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ I went forth with hope and fear,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life.
And, struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms—I past.”—SHELLEY.

HERBERT ERLE kept a diary. Diary keepers may be divided into two classes: those who think their sayings and doings worth recording; those who are too humble or too shy to speak their thoughts, and must needs find some outlet for them. On the 16th of August, Herbert wrote—“ I like this atmosphere after all; yet it is so different from England that one wonders to hear English spoken. There is much of the picturesque in daily life; the peasants group well by instinct. “ Irregularity marks every work; but the effect of the whole is not disagreeable, if once one can get rid of one's prejudice for straight lines, as Clancahir recommends. He and his mother are people apart from any I have ever met; they speak with authority, and yet they never argue points; there is more enthusiasm than reason in their beliefs, yet they are incontrovertible, or seem so; they don't speak so much of what is right and a duty, as of what is beautiful and a source of happiness. I suppose it is only another expression of the same human tendency towards perfection, but the effect on life is very different. Clancahir says this is the key to the antagonism between English and Irish natures. An Irishman does a thing because it is fine or beautiful to do it; an Englishman, because he ought. Clancahir thinks love of good is a higher motive than hatred of evil, and that its presence marks a nobler race of men. Still it appears to me, that in the present uneducated state of mankind, when good is so little defined and evil so universal, the English is the more useful idiosyncrasy. Results show it to be so.

Clancahir prophesies wonderful effects from education the Irish mind, greater than on the Saxon; and, for same reasons he says ignorance and barbarism are more destructive in their consequences to his countrymen. Once the true good is lost sight of, there is less in the Irish nature to preserve them from every extreme of evil: more folly than in the English. Show them it in art, in moral and they will devote themselves to it with an ardour which the northern nations are incapable. Certainly I do see in them an eagerness to attain the higher objects of our human nature, which is singular. They are capable of the most spiritual religion, of the most interested affection, to worship the beautiful and to appreciate the highest art. Theoretically, it appears true that these tendencies approximate more to that intimate union with and worship of perfection, which is human complete than the more useful but less noble English pursue in improving their own condition, however innocently they may follow it. Mr. Manly, whom we visited to-day, seems to think improvement lies only in the direct pursuit of greater personal comfort and the adoption of a protective social morality (so to speak) such as my countrymen possess. Clancahir says his are nobler without it, however dormant their virtues may be for want of perception of the beauty of truth, honesty, &c. Better possess them imperfectly than on commercial principles.

"How difficult all these questions are! And when I look within, what a chaos my opinions and principles are! Stephen's arguments and teachings contradict my own feelings; my own feelings are at war with my own doubts. No landmarks to point out my path in life! At every step new difficulties. Where shall I look for help? No man understands the other. I must be for ever utterly alone. Stephen is true in that. Curious how quietly and dispassionately one discusses the characteristics of nations, while yet one is in utter ignorance of the least important of one's own springs of action. Shall I ever know? Is there an inherent weakness in my mind which prevents my knowing as others do? Others seem content and untroubled; others have aims and ends before the hopes which they cherish; I only seem to be given *objectless* existence. I cannot be self-reliant, self-c

tained, as Stephen says. I long for something to do, to feel; and yet what can I do? I dare not expect to know that intense happiness of which I dream. I dare not. Disappointment to my kindled hopes would be unendurable; yet——”

“26th August. I am sorry to return to-morrow, I have been so happy here. The past fortnight will ever be a remembered epoch of my life. Epoch! I have entered on a new existence, as different from my former one as the view from these windows is before and after sunrise. There is a glow of light on all my future; and even my deficiencies, both mental and physical, are not the gloom-inspiring objects they were before. Stephen taught me that, in the consciousness of being good, alone should I find satisfaction. I think—I am sure—it is in the effort to do good that I may look for happiness. It is self-deception to hope to be good: pride to believe that it is possible. To do good is as easy as to lift the hand. Thousands of new interests, new sympathies, have crowded on my mind. To do good—the heart-swell I feel at the mere thought, proves Stephen’s theory of our isolation and solitude false. Most false! I am not alone: I love Clancahir; I think he likes me; we will walk through life together. I thank God for this new happiness: there is no more darkness in life. I could not have lived and believed in Stephen’s creed: it may suit his intellect, his great talents and learning, but I, who am weak and ignorant, longing for support, how could I have borne the weight of a solitary existence? This is the homeliest place I ever knew—to use the word as it deserves. I am sorry to break through the spell of perfect happiness I have been under; and yet I feel strong to encounter the cares and duties of life. I must keep pace with Clancahir. I must do, and not suffer: I can do something: it is time for me to begin. How useless I have been! how discontented and wrong! I brought all that I have suffered on myself—even Lady Effingham’s contempt. Mildred will not scorn me: I will, and I can, be worthy of her. After all, I am glad to begin life the day after to-morrow at Erlesmere. I blot out the past and its shadows: my future is bright.”

“You look all the better for your fortnight here,” said Lady Clancahir affectionately, as Herbert came to her morning-room the following day to wish her good-bye.

“I am stronger than I ever hoped to be,” he said, in a low voice.

"I say, Erle, you won't be in time for the steamer," interrupted Lord Clancahir. "I have business in Waterford, so I will drive you there myself; but we must start at once." Herbert remained silent, until they were clear of the valley, and had gained the rising ground which lay between Clancahir and the broad valley of the Suir. He could not speak before, for all he had to say; and when he did, he said something of the weather. At last they came to the half-way village.

"Are you at all converted to my views?" asked Lord Clancahir, pointing to the pretentious shop-board.

"I think you and your people are not to be judged by my rules of social right and convenience. The Irish are a problem; your solution seems probably right."

"That we are transported Orientals? Well, say so to every one you meet."

"I fear no one would accept my evidence."

"Everybody accepts everybody's evidence: one cannot speak without effect. Besides, you think of standing for Holmvale? You may be of use to us."

"Do you think it would be a good thing to do?"

"Certainly: and a personal benefit to you, I think. You must not live your solitary life any more."

"Harley's views are very false," Lord Clancahir went on: "in his aspirations he quite forgets that he and you are members of the human family, and subject to its laws. We are not lawgivers but law-discoverers; and the utmost we can do is to fulfil our subjecthood."

"I did not know there was a human family till this last fortnight," said Herbert, looking straight at the horse's ears.

There was a short silence: then—"I will go over to you for a few days in October," said Lord Clancahir; "in about six weeks hence."

"We must not lose sight of each other."

"That is not likely. We start nearly together in life, and with much the same objects." With indescribable pleasure Herbert listened to his friend. It was so new to him to have a friend; to think of "starting in life;" to have objects.

"Clancahir, do you really think I shall succeed in life?"

"Certainly, if you choose legitimate aims."

"But I am so disqualified."

"Nothing need be a disqualification."

"You don't understand what I mean."

"Yes I do. Every circumstance is intended to be a help in our career, and may be made one."

They had reached Waterford. The noise of a string of heavy wagons laden with butter hindered further conversation at the moment. The steam of the Bristol boat was up; Herbert had but time to get his luggage on board and grasp his friend's hand before the paddles turned, and the steamer was off. He stayed on deck until late, thoughtfully walking to and fro. He glanced indifferently at the Irish coast as he left it behind: he did not observe the beauty of the moon—the "laughter infinite" of the wavelets as her rays kissed their foreheads. "I blot out the past and its shadows: my future is bright!" he repeated to himself; and he walked with a firmer tread and more erect bearing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"—— From youre scole so devyaunt
I am, that never the more avaunt
Right noughte am I thurgh youre doctrine;
I dulle under youre discipline;
I wote no more than I wist ever
To me so contrarie and so fer
Is everything that ye me lere."—CHAUCER.

"I AM going to Effingham to-day, Stephen," said Herbert, the morning after his return from Ireland.

"What to do?" Mr. Harley asked, with constraint.

"I have much to do. I want Sir Harry to fix some time for going over my property with me: I must look into its condition."

"Oh, that's all!"

"That's everything," said Herbert a little impatiently.

"A country gentleman's 'everything:' and are you going to be one, Bertie?"

"To the best of my ability."

Mr. Harley looked grave. "Bertie," he said, "I see my teachings have been of no avail. If you make social good, social pre-eminence, your creed, you will one day find you have sought to grasp a shadow."

"It is not true, Stephen!" exclaimed Herbert vehemently; "men would not love so ardently if there were no objects for love."

"The myth of Prometheus answers you. In punishment

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of his error he was incessantly gnawed by the vulture—Disappointment.”

“Stephen, I cannot argue, but I feel I cannot attain to your self-sufficingness; I must break through the ice which has hitherto surrounded me. Your creed may satisfy you; it does not me.” He left the room hastily: he had spoken boldly; he had severed many ties which bound him to his guardian; he had not strength to prolong the discussion.

A look of almost anguish contracted Stephen's features. “It is as I feared,” he said. “Vain hope to shield any one from the probation of life! I tried to make him less vulnerable to sorrow; but human weakness is inherent.”

“Mr. Erle desired me to mention to you, sir, that he would be glad if you would meet him at Effingham,” said a servant who interrupted his thoughts.

“Meet him at Effingham!” Stephen muttered: “listen to the absurdities of Sir Harry; to Bertie's resolutions to commit his moral suicide; to Lady Effingham's smooth falsities. I must accustom myself to all: the sooner the better.” He drew on his gloves, took his hat, and walked slowly across the deer-park to Effingham.

Mildred stood on the steep bank of a stream which ran below her mother's terrace garden; she held her straw hat in her hand, the light wind ruffled her hair into a golden ripple. She started and turned half away, as Mr. Harley came in sight; then, recovering herself, she advanced a few steps to meet him, with a womanly defiance in her eye and bearing;—a womanly defiance, perhaps more suggestive of timidity than the softest look. “Are you learning to write verses from the birds, Miss Effingham?” Stephen asked. Her colour rose a little.

“I could not stay in-doors a morning like this. I was tired of the books you lent me, Mr. Harley: I hate reading.”

“Ah, you like your own thoughts better. Do you think all the books that ever were written are in them?”

“More: things that never were written.”

“I have an appointment with Herbert at Effingham; will you turn with me and walk towards the house?” Mildred did as he asked.

“Bertie has returned: he has become a philanthropist,” he said.

“Are not you one?”

“There is no one to love.” Mildred walked faster than before.

"The ideal is alone worthy of worship."

"Of worship. But——"

"Have you forgotten the conclusion we came to yesterday?"

"No."

"Which was?"

"That men loved, after all, only their ideals; and that, therefore, one with a cultivated mind, who had conceived a pure ideal, could not be deceived into thinking he had found it embodied in any Human."

"Excellently remembered: so philanthropy is a mistake, arising from want of mental culture." They reached the drawing-room entrance; Mildred looked at Stephen with bewildered astonished eyes.

"We will discuss the question this afternoon, Miss Effingham."

Mildred stood irresolute for a second when he had gone in; then she walked slowly to an unfrequented glade in the grounds, and lying down on the soft short sward, she shaded her eyes with her broad-brimmed hat from the sun, and abandoned herself to the luxury of day-dreams. Stephen was the prominent figure in all her mental pictures; Stephen with his eery theories, his wilding intellect, his singular indifference to the social forms from which she recoiled with a sense of their hollowness. Her imagination endowed him with qualities he, perhaps, did not possess; and those which already characterized him, were of all others the class to attract a woman of Mildred's stamp. Lady Effingham sat in a window recess of the drawing-room. She looked out on the brilliant flower-beds and the fountain with a thoughtful air. A closely-written letter, the grey transparent paper of which showed it to be foreign, lay on her lap. As Stephen entered, her features instantly assumed their habitual expression, and she rose with kindness to greet him. "I am so glad to see Mildred out this morning," she said. "Dear child! she is not half enough in the air. Pray give her lessons in botany or some out-of-doors science, Mr. Harley."

"Miss Effingham seems very well," said Mr. Harley.

"Yes; but she ought to have as much country air as possible between her seasons in London. I have been urging her to ride: I must ask Bertie to persuade her. *Apropos*, how much he has gained from his visit to Ireland!"

"Has he?"

"He seems quite revolutionised; he talks of his plans of life, and seems to have as many wishes as any other young man of

one-and-twenty. Lord Clancahir is a most useful associate for him : he is so very practical."

"Indeed !"

"I cannot tell you the satisfaction it gives me to see Bertie assuming his place in society. He owes so much to you, Mr. Harley. How he has improved ! His boyhood promised so little !"

"Can you tell me where he is now ?" asked Stephen : he did not value Lady Effingham's sudden condescensions. "He desired me to meet him here by appointment."

"He and Harry are closeted in the library. I think Mr. Dickson, his factor, is there too."

"Then I will join them. Good day, Lady Effingham."

"Pray tell Bertie to come to my sitting-room when he has done with business. What has become of Mildred, Mr. Harley ?"

"I cannot say ; but she was on the terrace when I came in."

As Stephen left the room, Lady Effingham took up the foreign letter, which had fallen to the ground. She slightly glanced through its contents for the second time ; then she slowly tore it in fragments, and the same thoughtful expression clouded her features. "I should say Bertie was obstinate ; he is sure to be returned for Holmvale. Cecil must not be encouraged : I don't think he has made any impression as yet. I hope Harry will see the folly of it ; but he is so absurdly fond of Cecil."

Mr. Harley paused a second in the vestibule, that he might recover his superiority to men and their "low ambitions," on which he prided himself. He had been slightly discomposed by Lady Effingham's remarks. "It would almost make one a disbeliever in personal identity," he thought. "Bertie, my pupil—a student of truth—a boy worthy of the world's youth a fortnight ago—now joining the herd of puppets that dance in associations !"

"I hope to do something towards improving the condition of my tenantry," he heard Herbert say as he entered the library.

"Pshaw !" said Sir Harry, impatiently. "I see more harm than good arising from these visions of education. You will end by having no lower classes. Who ever heard of an army of officers !"

"This Million-teaching is to white a sepulchre ; Million-education is another thing."

"True, Stephen ; a noble thing !" observed Herbert. "But *the vocation of God, not man.*"

Sir Harry looked at his signet ring with interest. Mr. Dickson took snuff. Herbert was leaning against the mantel-piece; but when Mr. Harley had spoken, he turned to him, and confronting his guardians, he said, firmly: "I thank you for your care of my affairs, and your kindness to me hitherto. Henceforward, I will try to perform my own duties, according to my own beliefs. I will always look for advice from you; but from this day I wish to assume my own responsibilities."

"Very well said, Herbert," said Sir Harry, drily. "I hope you will get into no scrapes, and do no harm by your fancies." Stephen was silent; he shaded his face with his hand.

"Will you look into my accounts now, sir?" the factor asked. Herbert examined the items. Mr. Dickson took repeated pinches of snuff with an air of gratification.

"Everything is satisfactory," said Herbert, when he had looked through the well-arranged summary of his affairs.

"I have to thank you, Sir Harry——"

"For very little. I have only fulfilled my trust."

"And you, Stephen?"

"I have not fulfilled mine as I could wish."

"To-morrow, at ten, Mr. Dickson, I will look over your plan for farm-offices."

"At your convenience, sir. Good morning."

"Lady Effingham wishes to see you," Mr. Harley said.

"Shall I find her in her room?"

"She said so." The suddenly-existent man went in search of his boyish idol: his guardians were left alone.

"This fine weather is fortunate for the harvest."

"Extremely. I must wish you good day, Sir Harry."

"Good day, Harley."

CHAPTER XXV.

"——— When first we love,
Our souls are clad with joy, as if a tree
All winter-bare had on a sudden leapt
To a full load of blooms."—A. SMITH.

"I AM so glad, Bertie, to see you devoting your energies to such good objects: I cannot tell you the pleasure it gives me."

"You are too kind, Lady Effingham. Still I am as yet but on the threshold: I do not know how far my intentions may be realized."

"I think—I am sure they will be fulfilled. But, even if

you are no wonder-worker, Bertie, it is most satisfactory that you should assume your place. At one time I hardly expected it." Herbert coloured slightly. She went on, rapidly: "Lord Clancahir has been your good genius: I do not think Mr. Harley's counsels were equally salutary."

"Perhaps not; but they were most well intended."

"I am glad you speak of them in the past tense; it is time for you to be independent, Bertie."

"I don't like the word independent; but I mean, in future, to undertake my own responsibilities."

"I congratulate you, Bertie. Mr. Harley's views of life were gloomy for a boy, and you were so sensitive, so delicate—I often sympathised with you, though I could not say so."

"Why?"

"Mr. Harley did not wish me to influence you: he had peculiar views of education. Harry thought it right to leave you entirely in his hands. I thought it cruel; but what could I do?"

"Dear Lady Effingham!"

"Now I want you to find Mildred for me; she is in some of the gardens. Ask her to desire the gardener to bring in some fresh plants to the drawing-room—a *Datura* and the *Amaryllis* which has flowered so well. Don't let her forget, Bertie; and come and dine with us to-night." He went to fulfil his mission. How bright life was to him! Schemes of benevolence, visions of Parliamentary usefulness—above all, a golden hope of successful love—filled his mind with a turmoil of anticipations. The sunny autumn day, the song of birds, the beauty of the gardens,—all was intoxicating; new health and vigour strung his muscles; the ground on which he walked felt to him elastic; his swelling heart seemed to buoy him up; wave after wave of exquisite enjoyment broke with a sparkling surf upon his senses: he revelled in the mere sense of existence; he seemed to live for the first time. He looked everywhere for Miss Effingham. She appeared unexpectedly, in a bend of the walk he was following. Grave to formality, with unsmiling lip, her presence was a sobering shock to his excitement; his manner grew instantly shy and constrained. "You are returning to Effingham, Bertie?" He did not like her to call him Bertie, in that stiff sisterly voice: *he delivered Lady Effingham's message with some abruptness. Mildred looked a little astonished: her mother seldom sent her messages.* "I will give her orders to the gardener," she said.

Herbert had purposed offering to return with her ; he had intended saying a thousand things ; telling her of his happiness, and gaining her sympathy. It seemed so easy ten minutes ago ! He stammered awkwardly : " Could I give them for you ? "

" No ; thanks. It is on my way home ; the sun is hot, and I am tired of walking. " She passed on. He went towards Erlesmere, with a chill at his heart. But a fresh phantasmagoria of his future soon re-appeared, crowded with figures of innumerable friends, virtuous and grateful villagers, model houses, and the usual hallucinations which fill the minds of enthusiastic young landlords and warm-hearted boys. " Has Mr. Harley returned ? " he asked of a servant as he went to the library at Erlesmere.

" No, sir. "

" When he does, tell him that I am here. "

He sat down and began to draw plans for his projected farm-yard ; he tired of repeated failure : farm offices are intricate. The last *Quarterly Review* lay on the table ; it opened at an article abusing, in capital letters and italics, Irish landlords. Its tone jarred with his then mood. A novel lay beside it : he looked through it, and found that it was of a moral tendency. The plot involved the ingenious disappointment of everybody's wishes. He threw the book away. In the budding of his aspirations, he could not bear to think that their flower must wither ere they bore fruit. His sketch-book lay near : he was a good amateur artist ; he tried to draw Lady Effingham ; he produced a sneering face. His pencils were bewitched : of all people, she had the sweetest physiognomy. Then he sketched a straight profile : a Greek head, but without its sensuousness ; large inspired eyes, scornful nostrils,—Mildred, as he had parted from her. He tore the sketch impatiently, and rang the bell. " Order Lurley to be saddled for me. " He rode through the gloomy wood-glades, and left them for the more open deer-park : he cantered up a low hill on which the sun beat fiercely, and wished for shade.

" Mr. Harley has returned, sir, " said a groom, as he dismounted.

" Ah, Stephen ! I have been wishing for you all day ; where have you been ? "

" At Eastham. "

" Eastham ! "

" I went to meet the London mail ; I expected books. "

"I had so many things to tell you after my fortnight's absence; and I am going to dine at Effingham to-night."

"So am I."

"Why, have you been there since?"

"Yes, on my way from Eastham."

"It is out of your way."

"Not to-day. But it is seven o'clock; time to dress Bertie."

"Why did you go to Effingham?"

"'Tis time to dress, Bertie."

They went to their rooms with a mutual feeling of irritation and estrangement. Stephen, vexed at the tone his former pupil and *ci-devant* worshipper assumed; Herbert, in his turn annoyed by Stephen's careless and yet authoritative manner to him. They both leant far back in Herbert's brougham when the light fell on them, so that Herbert sat in the cold blue shade of coming night. Stephen's dark eyes and raven hair gleamed ruddy in the western glow: he held a brown paper bag in his hand; it was directed to Miss Effingham. An unconscious restraint prevented Herbert from noticing the fact as he would have done a month ago. "Did you learn punctuality in Ireland?" Sir Harry asked with a slight smile; the mantel-piece clock struck the dinner hour as the servant announced his arrival.

"I learnt how inconvenient neglect of it was," said Herbert, with ease of manner unusual to him; a manlier voice and altogether more decided personality than heretofore.

At dinner he was graceful and unembarrassed, as Lord Clancahir might have been. Mr. Harley and Mildred were silent; but for an occasional causticism of Stephen's, a sharper retort from her. Then Herbert's cheek and brow would flush with pain. Ungentleness was at that moment an irritation to him; his world was so very good. The general atmosphere; the fair women, well-dressed, enchanting; the gleaming snowy table-cover, the picturesque fruit and sparkling equipage, relieved by the dark crimson hangings and antique mellow portraits, were new to him, as if he had in all his youth lived at Effingham. And Mildred opposite him with her other-world look,—like the divinity of a shrill glittering with what men could produce of the beautiful. She had a most rapt expression when she was in her silent mood—with large grey eyes, that looked out straight before them in thought; her autumn-tinted hair was drawn slightly down

upon her broad forehead, and wound in plenteous tresses round her well-organed head ; her dress was white, not gauzy or ethereal-looking, as might have suited a more Titania beauty, but of thick creamy silk, that fell in statuesque folds straight and massive about her. "You look pale, Milly," said Lady Effingham, when they were alone after dinner ; "you have dark circles round your eyes. Have you been out all this hot day?"

"Most of it," replied she, dreamily.

"Do not speak so absently, Mildred ; it is a habit that grows, and is very stupid in society. You must not go out during this weather until the evening ; you were quite pre-occupied all dinner-time. To make yourself agreeable is a duty."

"May one not be silently agreeable?"

"Not to me : I detest silent people. Herbert is quite revolutionized ; he is really endurable now. Mr. Harley is less so than ever."

Mildred had turned to the table : her green-and-gold MS. book no longer lay on it. Lady Effingham suddenly discovered its absence. "Have you been writing, Mildred?" she asked.

Miss Effingham thought of her worthless girlish rhymes : she replied, impulsively, "No, no ! I have not indeed."

"Yet you wrote some rather pretty verses, Milly : you ought not to take up a pursuit and lay it down so capriciously."

During these few minutes Mildred had changed as the sea might change, from a blue calm—reflecting heaven, with an infinite depth, an infinite breadth—to a leaden, angry narrowness of squally storm. "How hot this room is !" she said, impatiently. "Shall I open a window. It is intolerable."

"Not the room, Milly," replied Lady Effingham, with quiet emphasis.

"Something is intolerable, at all events," retorted Mildred.

"You must not so allow temper to overcome you, dear child : it is most injurious to you ; and no presence seems to restrain you. I often suffered for you in London."

"Suffered for me !" exclaimed Mildred.

"It was painful to see the utter recklessness of your conduct ; most painful," replied Lady Effingham, serenely : "at least to me, as your mother. I should think it only excited the ridicule of others. How good this coffee is ; is it not ? Herbert brought it from the East." After a pause, Lady Effingham continued : "Pray do not be sulky, Mildred ; nothing can be less becoming to you. Perhaps you had

better go to your room ; but no, I hear the gentlemen coming, and your father will wish you to sing."

"Have you looked at the books I brought?" Stephen asked, in a low voice, of Mildred.

"No ; where are they?"

"I desired them to be left in your room."

"The old schoolroom? Am I to read them? I don't like books."

"You are to study these ; you will like them."

"Are you already certain?"

"Yes ; as of your whole future."

"How ! are you a fortune-teller?"

"Yes ; for your future is legible in your present."

"Tell it to me."

"Conceive Sir Harry Effingham drawing a bow across the strings of a first-rate Amati."

"Papa knows nothing of music."

"Precisely. You are a capable instrument, but born to an incapable world. Your life will be one long wailing passionate discord."

His words seemed to Mildred, in her then mood, bitterly true: her heart burned within her. "I will read your books," she said.

"You will?"

"Shall I believe their words? I am tired of trying to believe ; it is hard work : I want to have involuntary Faith. I am not going to try to understand your books, Mr. Harley."

"You will not need ; you will find their truths in yourself: you will possess them, not understand them."

"Milly, sing," said Sir Harry from the fireplace ; "sing something lively ; I hate Germanism in music as much as in everything else." She sang an Italian scena firmly, brilliantly. Sir Harry whistled the air with her.

"Ice in the crowd, but lava when alone," muttered Stephen to himself. Herbert had joined Mildred at the piano.

"Do you know any Irish music?" he asked.

"One or two airs ; but they require to be sung with a tear in the voice."

"Sprung from the 'depths of some divine despair.'"

"Not divine, for they are eminently the wails of a subject people. I do not like them."

"Do not you like sorrowful music?"

"Not sorrowful, but grave."

"Schubert's *Lieder*, which you are so fond of, are sorrowful."

"They express rather a noble hope, a calm endurance."

"Endurance is suffering."

"It is rather a triumph. There should be no wail in music unless when it is merely imitative."

"Must not all men wail?"

"No," replied Mildred, proudly; "but whatever man may do, music ought to be emotionless."

"Milly, play some of those quadrilles I brought from London," said Sir Harry. She did so; then rising rather quickly, she went to an open window. There was a ghostly light from an unseen moon. 'Twas a suggestive night, crowded with ill omens and fantastic shadowings of evil shapes. The chill night air seemed to bring with it gloom and depression; for there grew a silence, despite of Lady Effingham. Mildred shivered slightly.

"Do shut the window, Milly; you are so imprudent! and come and settle our plans for to-morrow. We are going to drive over to Beaulieu: Herbert has promised to join us."

"I must give my morning to Dickson," said Herbert, with a business air.

"Oh! we go in the afternoon. In autumn, scenery ought to be seen by a setting sun. Harry, you won't come, I know. I must drive Lady Mary in my pony carriage. Mr. de Broke said he would ride; you had all better ride. Mr. Harley, our party must include you. I know you worship the beautiful, and Beaulieu is quite perfect."

"What is taking you over there?" asked Sir Harry; "it is too far for your ponies."

"Do let me have my own way, dear Harry. Coming back, if Milly is tired, Philip can ride her horse, and she can sit behind Lady Mary and me."

"Very well. Erle, I can give you a mount: Harley will want your pony." Herbert was pleased. Sir Harry had never been so kind in his manner.

"Come and have luncheon here before starting," Lady Effingham added. "We must go punctually at half-past two."



CHAPTER XXVI.

"Donna adorata nume è de l' inferno."—GUARINI.

"————— I feel as if life's stream
Were shooting o'er some verge to make a short,
An angry and precipitate descent,
Thenceforward much tormented on its way."—TAYLOR.

"I COMMIT Milly to your care, Bertie," said Lady Effingham, as with kindest look she took the reins, and touched her small Arab-looking horses. "You know the post of especial trust should always be confided to the youngest." They rode slowly down the park road; Mr. Harley and Mr. de Broke following. Mildred's horse was fresh; she touched it impatiently, it sprang forward with passion. Strange contrasts they were! Mildred, erect, graceful; with brilliant eager eyes, and a look half of triumph, half of anticipation of the unknown future, for which it was her nature constantly to pine. Herbert, frail and suffering, with that expression of unassured pleasure peculiar to sensitive organizations. "How beautiful Miss Effingham is to-day!" Mr. de Broke observed to Mr. Harley.

"Quite lovely," he replied, equivocally.

"Come, Harley, do lay aside your contempt for everybody to-day, and confess Miss Effingham is singularly handsome."

"Singularly."

"And clever?"

"And clever."

Mr. de Broke looked doubtfully at his companion: they were some minutes silent; again he tried to converse. "Your ward is immensely improved."

"People say so."

"I always thought he was underrated as a boy."

"Better than overrating."

"Ah! you think there is fear of that. Lady Effingham is markedly civil to him certainly. But it is natural enough; besides, I know his father wished a union of Effingham and Erlesmere. At his death, Herbert scarcely promised to attain his present manhood."

"Ah, yes! the boundaries of the estates run together," said Stephen, musingly. "True, I had half forgotten."

"Cecil is Sir Harry's favourite; but he has to push his way in the world before he can marry."

"Did you serve your time to a conveyancer, De Broke?"

"Eh! no, of course!"

"I think it would be well for young clergymen to do so; and short forms for passing and settling estates might be annexed to the service for matrimony: they seem a necessary part of the ceremony."

"Ah! you have odd notions, Harley."

"Most people's are still stranger."

"Well, we must get on; Miss Effingham rides fast." Every member of that party fell a-dreaming for the rest of the way to Beaulieu. There are states of the atmosphere which predispose to reverie; days in September and the early weeks of October, when we fall in trances,—when there is a mist over our perceptions, and our ideas glow with many-coloured warmth, while the commonest, most every-day objects, loom colossally; gossamer webs clothe the most withered branches with a glittering unreality; without and within is an enchanted fairy-land, peopled by our own creations—Fairies, Pucks, Robin-good-fellows, or Titanias, and here and there the dark shadow of a gliding evil one.

"How fast you have driven!" exclaimed Lady Mary, awakening from a dream of her children's future perfection, irrespective of their worldly position.

"I think we must have left the riders far behind," said Lady Effingham, who had been thinking with equal intentness of Mildred's future worldly position, irrespective of her perfection: "But here they are!" glancing through the trees.

"We have been very silent," observed Mildred to her companion.

"Sometimes one does not need to speak," replied Herbert.

"These woods are beautiful."

"Most beautiful to-day."

"Mr. de Broke and Mr. Harley are not in sight."

"Stephen is badly mounted. Shall we let our horses walk a while?"

"What a regular day of idleness you and I are giving ourselves, Harley," observed Mr. de Broke. "Now that I think of it, I can't conceive how I come to be here, ten miles from my parish."

"You have been there this hour past," remarked Stephen.

"True, so I have; and you?"

"As usual, in Utopia," said Stephen, irritably, almost angrily.

"So you do confess you have a Utopia?"

"You admire Miss Effingham, don't you, De Broke?"

"Beyond everything. You do, too, surely?"

"Surely."

"She is accomplished."

"Accomplished, superficial, vain, egotistical, selfish."

"Good heavens! Harley."

A turn in the wood-road brought them close on Herbert and Mildred, who had reined up their horses for a moment's breathing-time. Mildred turned and looked at Mr. Harley; she had heard his words. It would be hard to describe that look: pride, pain, and shame struggled for mastery. Very reproachful was also the expression of Herbert's countenance. "My dear Milly, how fast you ride!" exclaimed Lady Effingham, as her daughter and Herbert swept up at almost a gallop to the door of Beaulieu House. "How flushed you are! Bertie, you have not taken good care of her after all: I must give her to Mr. de Broke's or Mr. Harley's charge on our return."

"You are quite overheated, my dear child," said Lady Mary, who had alighted, taking Mildred's unwilling and closely-compressed hand; "and these autumn evenings are chilly."

"I promised the duchess that I would write and tell her how her roses look," said Lady Effingham. "Will you come to the garden with me, Lady Mary? Milly, it will rest you to come too: and you, Bertie." He assisted Mildred to dismount; her hand trembled, and red flushes chased each other over her cheeks and brow. He longed to say something, but she left no silences as they threaded the rose *parterre*: she talked gaily, and laughed often.

"How much dear Mildred has enjoyed her ride," observed Lady Mary.

"Bertie has grown quite a charming companion," said Lady Effingham. She looked back inquiringly at her daughter; her manner was not satisfactory. How grave Herbert was! how excited Mildred!

"Had you not best drive back, dearest?" she asked of her daughter, as the party were again assembling for their return.

"I had rather ride," replied Mildred, hastily. The echoes of her mother's and Lady Mary's conversation, and that intense bore which, at the best of times, seizes on any occupant of the back seat of a pony carriage, would have been unendurable to her in her then mood.

"We will return then as we came?" said Lady Effingham, interrogatively.

"Exactly as we came," echoed Mildred.

"Very well. Don't be rash, Mildred: you are incautious."

"I have no need for caution."

Lady Effingham said nothing in reply to Lady Mary's babble for a good half hour. The question, "Do you agree with me?" at last obliged her to consider the subject under discussion. She was preparing a comprehensive and diplomatic reply which might serve all purposes, when the sound of horses plunging, and exclamations behind the carriage, caused her to draw up abruptly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"————— My full-grown love was born—
Born as the sudden lightning—and my soul
Broke into flame, and all my being shook,
And glowed, and kindled, while my hand lay cold
And tremulous in his."—*Unpublished MS.*

BOIARDO or Ariosto might have written a canto on the events which had taken place ere Lady Effingham had time to stop and look round; but results are all that interest readers now-a-days, and the occupation of verbose describers is gone. Herbert lay on the ground insensible: Mildred leant, pale and unnerved, on Mr. Harley's arm; her horse stood shivering, and white with sweat. In a second, Lady Effingham was at the spot, picturesquely alarmed. "You are safe, Milly! thank God! dearest child!" her voice seemed to restore firmness to her daughter.

"I am all right, mother; but Herbert?"

"He is coming to life," said Mr. de Broke, who had brought some water from a spring, and dashed it on Bertie's face.

"How did it all happen? Basil, do tell me!" implored Lady Mary, nervously.

"I hardly know," he replied. "Harley can tell you more about it."

"My horse reared, and Mr. Harley saved me from falling under it," said Mildred, coldly.

"How terrible!" exclaimed Lady Effingham; "and Bertie?"

"My horse must have struck him; he tried to catch its rein. I think, but for that, it would hardly have fallen back."

"Poor fellow, he did it for the best," said Lady Mary, compassionately. "Do you think he is much hurt, Basil?"

"Not externally."

"I am better," said Herbert, feebly; and he tried to rise. "I can ride home well enough."

"You must do no such thing," interposed Mr. de Broke, kindly: "Lady Effingham will give you a seat home."

"Certainly," she assented at once: "but you, dearest Milly? you ought not to get on that horse again."

"She can ride Herbert's," suggested Stephen.

"Will you take great care of her, Mr. Harley? you seem able to do so."

"My dear boy, take my arm," said Mr. de Broke, for Herbert's paleness increased.

"Is that animal really quiet, Milly?" Lady Effingham asked, as the side-saddle was being girthed on Herbert's horse.

"Quite sufficiently so, for me."

"For heaven's sake take care, dearest! These accidents are very trying to my nerves."

Lady Mary sat good-naturedly behind the pony carriage, leaving the more comfortable place next Lady Effingham for Herbert. "You are not suffering, dear Bertie?" she asked, after they had driven a few paces; for he leant back with closed eyelids and contracted features. He murmured something inaudible in reply; he feared to trust himself to speak.

"Will you mount, Miss Effingham?" asked Stephen Harley. There was a tenderness, a tone of entreaty in his voice, so new to it, that she started and looked hastily at him. His countenance did not belie the modulation of his words: an eerie beauty overspread his haggard, worn features, like a sunburst on a scaur. She could not indifferently turn away, as her first impulse prompted.

"This road is too narrow for three abreast," said Mr. de Broke, when they had ridden on awhile; "will you go on first? I have a parish visit to pay down this lane; I shall overtake you by the next cross-road." A silence followed. Mildred's features grew rigid in their statue-like calm. Stephen's eyes were cast on the ground: once or twice he looked up to speak; but, seeing her proud, set countenance, he desisted. Mr. de Broke's visit delayed him longer than *he had intended*; he did not overtake them: they reached *the park-gate of Effingham*.

"Probably Herbert has returned to Erlesmere," suggested Stephen, with ceremony. "May I leave you to Philip's attendance, Miss Effingham?"

"Please, sir," said the gatekeeper, anxiously—she was an emigrant from Erlesmere, and still attached to its young master—"Mr. Herbert fainted just as my lady drove up here: the doctor has been sent for, and he is gone up to the house."

"Perhaps you had better go on and see him, Mr. Harley," hinted Mildred, half timidly, half stiffly.

"You will be kind to him," he said, hesitating.

"Of course! and my mother will."

"Ah!" exclaimed Stephen, hurriedly; "I had better go: attention is not always kindness."

"It is an excellent substitute."

"Appearances stand for realities now-a-days," returned Mr. Harley; "but I thought you did not so highly value them."

"I underrated them unduly for a time; it was a mistake: words have value, as symbols of our meaning—in any case, of our feelings."

"You have looked through one of the books I left last night, I perceive: you use its language."

"I glanced through it."

"Study it, Miss Effingham."

"That it may render me less vain, egotistical, and selfish!" retorted Mildred, turning her eyes full upon Mr. Harley, with a somewhat dazzling glare.

"That it may," he rejoined, with composure.

Her lip quivered, and a crimson flush overspread her countenance. "Such a life as mine was little worth preserving, if those be its characteristics."

"There is a future," said Stephen, earnestly.

They reached the porch. Mildred stood irresolute, for a second, after she had alighted: she grew a little pale; then bending full upon Stephen her wondrous eyes, full of electric light—"You preserved my life for a future." He took her hand and kissed it. Herbert had sprained his wrist; and the doctor, seeing besides that his patient continued pale and suffering, assumed that there must be some internal injury: he ordered him to be kept quiet for a day or so, and not to leave Effingham. Lady Effingham added several reasons for so doing. Mr. Harley found all arranged when he joined the *medical council*,

"I had so many things to tell you after my fortnight's absence; and I am going to dine at Effingham to-night."

"So am I."

"Why, have you been there since?"

"Yes, on my way from Eastham."

"It is out of your way."

"Not to-day. But it is seven o'clock; time to dress, Bertie."

"Why did you go to Effingham?"

"'Tis time to dress, Bertie."

They went to their rooms with a mutual feeling of irritation and estrangement. Stephen, vexed at the tone his former pupil and *ci-devant* worshipper assumed; Herbert, in his turn annoyed by Stephen's careless and yet authoritative manner to him. They both leant far back in Herbert's brought-up chair, the light fell on them, so that Herbert sat in the cold shade of coming night. Stephen's dark eyes and raven hair gleamed ruddy in the western glow: he held a brown paper in his hand; it was directed to Miss Effingham. An uncountable restraint prevented Herbert from noticing the fact as he would have done a month ago. "Did you learn punctuality in Ireland?" Sir Harry asked with a slight smile, the mantel-piece clock struck the dinner hour as the servant announced his arrival.

"I learnt how inconvenient neglect of it was," said Herbert, with ease of manner unusual to him; a manner very different from the altogether more decided personality than heretofore.

At dinner he was graceful and unembarrassed, as Lord Clancathir might have been. Mr. Harley and Mildred were silent; but for an occasional causticism of Stephen's, a rarer retort from her. Then Herbert's cheek and brow were flushed with pain. Ungentleness was at that moment an illness to him; his world was so very good. The general atmosphere; the fair women, well-dressed, enchanting; the gleaming snowy table-cover, the picturesque fruit and sparkling equipage, relieved by the dark crimson hangings, antique mellow portraits, were new to him, as if he had all his youth lived at Effingham. And Mildred opposite him with her other-world look,—like the divinity of a shrub glittering with what men could produce of the beautiful. *She had a most rapt expression when she was in her silent mood—with large grey eyes, that looked out straight before them in thought; her autumn-tinted hair was drawn slightly*

upon her broad forehead, and wound in plenteous tresses round her well-organed head ; her dress was white, not gauzy or ethereal-looking, as might have suited a more Titania beauty, but of thick creamy silk, that fell in statuesque folds straight and massive about her. "You look pale, Milly," said Lady Effingham, when they were alone after dinner ; "you have dark circles round your eyes. Have you been out all this hot day?"

"Most of it," replied she, dreamily.

"Do not speak so absently, Mildred ; it is a habit that grows, and is very stupid in society. You must not go out during this weather until the evening ; you were quite pre-occupied all dinner-time. To make yourself agreeable is a duty."

"May one not be silently agreeable?"

"Not to me : I detest silent people. Herbert is quite revolutionized ; he is really endurable now. Mr. Harley is less so than ever."

Mildred had turned to the table : her green-and-gold MS. book no longer lay on it. Lady Effingham suddenly discovered its absence. "Have you been writing, Mildred?" she asked.

Miss Effingham thought of her worthless girlish rhymes : she replied, impulsively, "No, no ! I have not indeed."

"Yet you wrote some rather pretty verses, Milly : you ought not to take up a pursuit and lay it down so capriciously."

During these few minutes Mildred had changed as the sea night change, from a blue calm—reflecting heaven, with an infinite depth, an infinite breadth—to a leaden, angry narrowness of squally storm. "How hot this room is !" she said, impatiently. "Shall I open a window. It is intolerable."

"Not the room, Milly," replied Lady Effingham, with quiet emphasis.

"Something is intolerable, at all events," retorted Mildred.

"You must not so allow temper to overcome you, dear child : it is most injurious to you ; and no presence seems to restrain you. I often suffered for you in London."

"Suffered for me !" exclaimed Mildred.

"It was painful to see the utter recklessness of your conduct ; most painful," replied Lady Effingham, serenely : "at least to me, as your mother. I should think it only excited the ridicule of others. How good this coffee is ; is it not ? Herbert brought it from the East." After a pause, Lady Effingham continued : "Pray do not be sulky, Mildred ; *nothing can be less becoming to you. Perhaps you had*

"You may as well stay with us, Harley," added Sir Harry, "and not remain alone at Erlesmere: we all owe you a good deal for this day's work. By the bye, I never knew Milly's horse rear; did you see what happened?"

"I fancy a bee stung the horse on the nostril," replied Herbert: "I saw one settle on it, and I tried to brush it off."

"Not very wise," said Sir Harry. "The horse reared high, I suppose?"

"So high that I caught at the rein."

"Which made matters worse." Herbert coloured and said no more.

"It seems to me Bertie led the forlorn hope, and suffered accordingly," said Lady Effingham; "and then Mr. Harley came to the rescue. Milly is indebted to both."

"Rather differently," added Sir Harry, drily; "but where is Mildred?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"A wild convulsion shook her inner world;
The lowest depths were heaved tumultuously:
Far unknown molten gulfs of being rushed
Up into mountain peaks, and there stood still.
A soul that led a fairy life, athirst
For beauty only, passed into a woman's:
In pain and tears was born a childlike need
For God, for truth, and for essential love.
But first she woke in terror; was alone,
For God she saw not;—woke up in the night,
The great wide night, without a mother's hand
To soothe her, or a father's voice to cheer."—McDONALD.

MILDRED had gone to her room: she leant against the window-sill; her fair hair, escaped from the fastenings, fell over her habit in glittering streams; she looked out into the dusky purple twilight, restlessly, eagerly; there was no softness in her eyes, no repose in her expression. Half frightened, half defiant; dissatisfied and satisfied at once; with no defined thought, but a crowd of impulses, she stood and gazed into the calm impassive night. She had sometimes—not often, but sometimes—pictured to herself how she should fare when her turn of the almost universal fever—Love, should come. *She had prefigured the emotions that might arise beforehand; she had determined how far she should suffer the encroachment of the world-crowned power: it was curious how*

obliterated all such speculations were now from her mind. Her hand yet glowed—throbbing, as if a concentrated fever had seized the spot on which Stephen had impressed his lips. That some change had reversed every previous rule of her mind, she felt; but more she knew not. Perhaps the excitement of the day's events had added impetus to the wild whirl of her mind. Her maid came hurrying into the room—profuse in congratulations, voluble in her criticisms of every one's conduct. "They say, ma'am, that you owe your life to Mr. Harley?" Maids always love to enhance the romantic.

"I will not dress for half an hour, Benson."

"It only wants ten minutes of dressing time, ma'am."

"Come again in twenty minutes," said Miss Effingham, impatiently.

She turned and stood again at the window. She owed her life to Stephen Harley! her physical life, but that was little. There are epochs when we not only believe speculatively, but intimately feel, that our present existence is worthless, except as it is an opportunity for the development of our undying powers; when we cease to be guided by sense, and rise above the wishes and necessities of mortality. Mildred had been a thwarted child; a much governessed girl; a well-drilled young lady. Her vehement heart had been kept in check by the thousand curbs and restrictions of a "good education." As a child, she had been fractious; as a girl, sulky; as Miss Effingham, proudly contemptuous, silently rebellious. Yet it was alien to her nature to be contemptuous: in her thorough womanhood were none of the elements of rebellion. Day after day she had become more isolated; day after day she had become less filial to her parents, more impatient of her objectless existence, more indifferent to the social ends which engrossed her mother. Mildred had brilliant gifts: sparkles of genius flashed in her talk, in her private and unshackled writings. She had no imitative powers, no cleverness; with all her instruction, she did few things well: her drawings were unfinished sketches; her music wanted carefulness. Genius *is*—talent *does*; but people judge by success, not by power. Mildred was little appreciated in society. In vain her mother ordered her dress, lectured her in private, praised her in public; she startled rather than pleased, and the society she had mixed in was too much dazzled to admire her. *Mr. Harley* appeared in her monotonous circle,—*Mr. Harley*, whose most trivial conversation was suggestive; of whose

intellect she felt the superiority to hers. Thoughts, over which she had brooded until they had assumed an undue magnitude, fell carelessly from his lips; his creed answered her imagined necessities; his aspirations seemed divine to her. His abruptness at first offended her—all the more because she mostly felt his strictures on her remarks and performances were deserved; but after a time she grew reverential towards him. She looked eagerly for his approbation, seldom accorded; she read the books he recommended; and while her mind drank thirstily of the imagination-filling theories contained in them, she remembered with gratitude him who had opened her eyes and given her a new existence. It was a bitter moment when she overheard the fragments of his opinion of her, so harshly, so unmistakeably, expressed to Mr. de Broke in the woodland drive of Beaulieu. She had never before known the like heart-sickness as those words had caused her. First came a flush of anger; but it faded, and a feeling of loneliness and desolation followed, a sense of injustice, and hopelessness of aught else in this unpeopled world—unpeopled to her. Very woman that she was, her books, her new creeds, her world of unexplored thought to which Stephen had introduced her, lost their interest as he withdrew from her horizon. Then came her momentary danger—his accidental companionship; but nothing is accidental. Again her woman's pride for a moment had stirred within her, to be again quelled by the magic of his calm, earnest words, and his autocratic manner. "There is a future," he said. What a vehement resolve filled every throbbing vein, every quivering nerve of hers, that he should be the guide, the arbiter of that future! He accepted that resolve. As his lips touched her hand, Mildred knew that she was more than accepted—that she was beloved. No resolve, no coherent thought, marked that moment to Stephen. It was a dream, a wild mad dream: he was intoxicated, delirious, what you will,—this philosopher, this scorner by principle, this hermit Titan. New life rushed through his veins; feeling, long suppressed, broke forth transformingly. Yet, in this English world, custom and habit are more powerful than any imaginable emotion. Mr. Harley repaired, with a calm exterior and solicitous manner, to Herbert's side: Mildred retired to her room, and after a few moments of solitude she dressed for dinner, and joined her mother in talking the usual routine of ante-dinner common-places with her habitual nonchalance.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Io che stimava tutto il mondo nulla,
Senz' arme vinto son da una fanciulla."—BOIARDO.

"Savez-vous ce que c'est qu'un cœur de jeune fille ?
Ce qu'il faut pour briser ce fragile roseau
Qui ploie et qui se courbe au plus léger fardeau ?
L'amitié—le repos—celui de sa famille—
La douce confiance—et sa mère—et son Dieu—
Voilà tous ses soutiens;—qu'un seul lui manque, adieu!"

A. DE MUSSET.

MISS EFFINGHAM's escape; Mr. Harley's assistance; Herbert's failure—bungling, Sir Harry called it—were debated, and formed the staple of conversation during that evening. The words sounded unreal in Mildred's ears, as dreamingly she went through the forms of dinner. Not so to Stephen; he was rather stimulated by the memories of the day to a keener appreciation of all without. His former absence of mind was exchanged for an unusual realization of the trivialities of society. Lady Effingham's smoothness, Sir Harry's prejudice, became yet more distasteful to him; their trifling characteristics almost unbearable. His love for Mildred had torn the philosophic mantle from his grasp, and he stood revealed, even to himself, an acutely sentient man. Now, changes in a man's being, which are the work of his will, are gradual; but those from without lead him suddenly captive. He turns from his past, he looks towards a new heaven, or, it may be, a new earth. Not a thought gave Stephen Harley to his well-ordered theories, as he devoted himself to the luxury of recalling how Mildred's hand had trembled in his, and felt the "delicious torment" of his heart's longing for another touch of that hand. It was so new to him! He had not, with all his learning, known that such maddening pain-pleasure could be. A delicious torment, truly, that evening was to him! He was glad when Lady Effingham withdrew for the night, and he could pace his room unseen. Sir Harry Effingham called his daughter into her mother's dressing-room. "Mildred, your manner is really not what it should be to Mr. Harley." She looked up, startled. "Manner should not be governed by likes or dislikes. It is very probable that Mr. Harley may not *please you*; but, as my guest, I expect you to be *commonly civil to him*—particularly as he saved you to-day from the consequences of Herbert's awkwardness."

"I am very much obliged to Mr. Harley."

"Appear so," Sir Harry said, drily, as his daughter left the room, after interchange of good-nights.

"It is contrary to Milly's nature to admit an obligation," said Lady Effingham, with a smile.

"After such a lecture, she will be stiffer than ever to Mr. Harley; but really I scarcely wonder—there is something peculiarly disagreeable to me in him."

"That ought not to signify: Mildred must do as she is desired."

"Of course."

"What a baby Herbert is!"

"A baby very much in love."

"Pooh! with some other baby?"

"With Mildred."

"How very silly! But she can't like him?"

"Why not?"

"He is a weak-minded enthusiast; besides—his health, his appearance!"

"He is much improved: he is singularly interesting; his lumeness is scarcely perceptible; his features would be handsome but for their extreme paleness."

"You would not compare him to Cecil?"

"Of course not; but Cecil is not in love with Mildred."

"He will be, when he returns; he was, when he left."

"A mere boyish fancy. Herbert's whole heart is in this."

"And yours, too, apparently."

"My dear Harry, you know I like Cecil much the best; but, really——"

"Really, Herbert is an elder son by half an hour, and is master of Erlesmere and seven or eight thousand a-year, with considerable accumulations."

"Poor dear Cecil."

"Has only himself to rely on. Women, unless they are in love, never estimate what men can do, and then they exaggerate; but, were I a woman, I would much prefer Cecil, with his talents and opportunities, to a sickly, nervous creature like your new protégé."

"Pray do not call him my protégé, Harry. I should have hoped better for Mildred than either of these brothers; but she does not please in society, and you wished so much——"

"Why, it is a kind of point of honour to forward a mar-

riage between Cecil and Mildred, if they like each other; Erle pressed me about it so strongly."

"But, at that time, every one thought Cecil would have inherited."

"After all, his inheritance is better worth having than his brother's: he will succeed in life. This private secretaryship that he is offered, is an excellent beginning: he is pretty sure of Holmvale after awhile."

"Herbert means to stand himself."

"Herbert!"

"Herbert has more energy and talent than you think, Harry."

"That poor fellow stand for Holmvale! with such notions, so ignorant of the world—full of theories! I will not support him. Harley will have to return him for a borough in Utopia!" Lady Effingham laughed; Sir Harry smiled: he felt a profound pity for Herbert. Lady Effingham knew she had made the desired impression; she said no more. The gong sounded for prayers next morning, and Mildred did not appear. Contrary to his usual custom, Mr. Harley was there, listening, with more attention than was his wont, to Sir Harry's monotonous reading of the morning lesson. Now, it was a grave error, in Sir Harry's eyes, that any member of his family should not be present at that time: it was an infraction of his domestic laws. He took up the morning paper with an air of considerable annoyance: its columns were full of accounts of rick-burnings, agricultural distress, and convulsive utterances of popular discontent. He laid it down impatiently. "Where is Mildred?" he asked of Lady Effingham. She entered at the moment, pale and rather grave, and silent; her hair was a little ruffled, and caught the light as it fell athwart it. Stephen thought it an aureole as she passed by him to her accustomed seat; not so, Sir Harry. "You are late, Mildred!" he said, with sternness.

"I have been out," she said; "it was so fine a morning."

"You don't look well, Milly," her mother interposed: "you did not sleep, dearest, after your excitement?"

"I am quite well," Mildred said, with evident constraint; but her sunken eyes, blue-circled, her tremulous hand, her dimmed brilliance, did not support her words. There was a calm and abstraction in her air, too, different from her common manner. Sir Harry was irritable, and her quietness increased his vexation. Had he been impartial, it would

have disarmed his anger. But, this morning, the world seemed to him a very undisciplined one: serfs were rebelling; Mildred was unpunctual; his sense of duty obliged him to check such insubordination. "I beg you are not late again. It is very silly going out before breakfast in October; very disrespectful to me to come in with hair so untidy."

"I am sorry," Mildred began, gently.

"It is no matter now whether you are sorry or glad: remember, you have my orders not to do so again."

"Not to go out before breakfast?" Mildred asked, roused from her apathy to a somewhat indignant surprise.

"You have heard my orders," her father said, drily. Mildred pushed her plate from her. With glaring eyes, dilated nostrils, and quivering lips, she rose from the table, and seemed about to speak in her excitement. Sir Harry's manner became cold and inflexible, as it always did when he was opposed.

"Do not leave your place," he said; "sit down." Mildred remained still standing—intense defiance in her aspect. Sir Harry slowly laid the paper on one side, rose from his seat, and passing to where Mildred stood, he touched her shoulder lightly. She was quelled: she sat down, pale and exhausted. Stephen started from his seat and left the room: the scene was intolerable to him. Lady Effingham was silent: she also suffered, from distaste to witnessing so painful a conflict.

"Go to your room, Mildred, and remain there," Sir Harry said, after a moment's pause, with an indifferent voice—a sentence-passing voice, which he assumed on such occasions. Alas! they were not rare! Quietly she obeyed. Lady Effingham remained silent. Sir Harry drank a glass of water at one draught, looked at his watch, strolled to the window, and at length observed,—*"Mildred is very obstinate and disobedient."*

"I thought her gentler than usual to-day."

"She is sulky."

"I do not think so, Harry. She was angry for a second; not when she left the room."

"Why did she not speak, then?"

"She was preoccupied."

"Preoccupied at such a moment! By what?"

"She walked out of the room like one in a dream; very *differently from usual.*"

"*It was so much the better,*" said Sir Harry.

"You do not make allowance for her hastiness of temper. If you had but looked at her pale face this morning, you would not have been so severe: she had not slept."

"What has that to say to obedience! But I don't know what you are driving at, Caroline. Is Mildred ill?"

"Not ill."

"What then?" said Sir Harry, impatiently.

"My dear Harry! her long ride yesterday;—Herbert's accident——"

"Tired and frightened her, I suppose: but I can't wait; I have an appointment with De Broke on business—some vestry bore."

CHAPTER XXX.

"Ceux qui vivent, ce sont ceux qui luttent."—VICTOR HUGO.

LADY EFFINGHAM went to see how Herbert was. The doctor met her in the passage that led to his room. "This is an early visit, doctor. I did not know you were here: have you had breakfast?" He was a clever, rising man, this doctor: different from his predecessor; fonder of his profession than of breakfast, or even of Lady Effingham's society.

"Why," he replied, "Mr. Erle's case requires some care for a time; I must be a frequent visitor of his."

"How! I am sorry to hear that he was much hurt yesterday; there seemed very little injury."

"His system is much shaken; he is naturally delicate; he will require judicious and kindly care. Can he remain here, Lady Effingham?"

"Certainly."

"Better for him for the present than Erlesmere. I have seldom seen any one with so sensitive a frame; his nerves are much jarred."

"Ah! the greatest suffering there is!" Mr. Taylor half smiled as he looked at Lady Effingham's "vital" organization.

"With your sympathy for it," he added, "I am sure I need not tell you that cheerful influences and kindness are the best restoratives for my patient; but he stands in need of them. His *physique* depends more than in most cases on the condition of his *morale*: he is intensely susceptible to impressions."

"I will take care they are agreeable," replied Lady Effingham, with extreme kindness.

"He has sprained his wrist severely; but I was glad to find him dressed, though lying down. Would you begin your kind offices, Lady Effingham, by visiting him?"

"I was just about to do so," she replied; "thanks for your permission, doctor: you will find breakfast down-stairs." She bowed and passed into Herbert's room. He rose to meet her: his right hand was in a sling, she took the disengaged one affectionately. "You have escaped with but a sprained wrist, dear Bertie, the doctor tells me; but I have persuaded him to let you stay here for a day or two." He smiled rather quiveringly, as he said, in a low voice, "You are very kind."

"I think I ought to add to his prescription, 'Mr. Harley not to be admitted, or any other philosopher.'"

"Yet, perhaps, I need philosophy."

"To enable you to endure life here, Bertie!"

"Ah! no; but——"

"I thought you had emancipated yourself from all your Harleian notions. Why, you were quite a practical man of the world the day before yesterday!"

"I have no world."

"Have you renounced it, then, before you had even entered it! Don't do that, Bertie. There is a great deal to interest, to be done in it; in short, it's a very good place, this maligned world, and a most excellent and enjoyable locality for those who choose to make it so."

"So Clancahir says; so I fancied; but——"

"Don't say 'but;' you will be all you wish, Bertie; never fear."

"I had some small ambitions; not so much for being, as for doing."

"Deeds of valour! You were always a knight errant, Bertie."

"Some little good to mark my hitherto useless life," said Herbert, so gravely and earnestly that Lady Effingham could not but be impressed.

"But why should you not?" she asked in that tone of exquisite kindness and affection so irresistible to Herbert.

He looked wistfully at her. "Because I have not power. I fail in all I attempt: my strength came like a gleam of sunshine; it is ready to pass away under the slightest cloud of discouragement."

"But the cloud is yet more evanescent," said Lady Effingham, gently. She smoothed his soft silky hair with her beau-

tiful hand. A calm diffused itself through his nerves ; he remained silent for a while.

"I fear to hope," at length he said ; "it is so unbearable to be disappointed."

"Tell me what you hope for, dear Bertie ; I may help you to attain it." He looked at her doubtfully ; then sinking back, with a sigh of pain :

"Ah ! you would laugh at my visions."

"Trust me, I should not."

"Oh ! they are mere dreams. I laugh at them myself," he said, hastily.

Stephen Harley entered ere Lady Effingham could draw more from Herbert : he started to find her there. "I have had sudden news," he said. "A distant relation, whom I never saw, is dying, and has sent for me."

"And are you going, Steenie ?" Herbert asked, with so much of former childish attachment in his manner, that Mr. Harley suddenly bent over him, and took his hand caressingly, as in old times.

"Why, how do you feel, Bertie ? Would you wish me to stay ?"

"On condition you do not philosophize, Mr. Harley," interposed Lady Effingham, with a smile.

"You ought to go, Stephen," said Herbert.

"There is, of course, some bequest or legacy, Mr. Harley, not to be carelessly risked," remarked Lady Effingham. He turned from her. A bequest *had* become of utmost need to him, since that breakfast scene in which Mildred had been so roughly used.

"I will go to-day," he said, abruptly : "I will return soon. Be careful, Bertie—careful in everything : do not forget me." Again he bent over his pupil,—so closely, that Bertie looked up in some surprise : he met so earnest, so loving a glance from Stephen's eyes, as still more startled him. He felt a sense of unaccountable sympathy and affection,—new and different from his boyish respect and veneration. "God bless you, Bertie !" Mr. Harley said earnestly, and passed quickly from the room.

"I hope Mr. Harley will be a gainer by this journey," said Lady Effingham ; but Herbert felt disinclined for farther conversation with her : he was thinking of Stephen's sudden tenderness of manner. After a few commonplaces, Lady Effingham left him.

"You ought to sleep, dear Bertie; and I must go to the school." Slowly, and in perplexed meditation, she walked there. The doctor's remarks had slightly shaken her faith in Herbert's recovered health: a constitution so nervous must soon wear out. It would scarcely be a happy fate for Milly; yet Cecil was penniless, and Sir Harry so obstinately set on a marriage with either son. "Mildred likes Herbert better than Cecil, I think," she soliloquised; "and that is a great matter. It is very strange, but one always sees contrasts liking each other."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"He came with his deep love to me
 In the time of my sorest need,
 The one living heart that knew me,
 And then I was blest indeed;
 Like a heaven of light above me,
 Like Eden in sudden sight,
 Came the knowledge that he would love me,
 On the gloom of my polar night."—*Unpublished MS.*

MILDRED rested on the sofa in her room with shut eyelids: her head was slightly thrown back; a smile parted her lips; one hand fell over the edge of the sofa, and by its straight extension added to the character of utter repose which marked her attitude—repose and inexpression. She did not think, she did not enjoy, she scarcely knew what happened. Intense emotion is most self-contained of all moods. She lay in a calm of passion. A letter was on the ground by her side—a letter, blotted, scrawled almost illegibly, yet clear to her eyes as briefer type, and already copied on her memory. The preceding afternoon had taught her much. She had before then felt that a sympathy existed between her and Stephen Harley; she had given a wild devotion to him; but she knew when he had kissed her hand that this devotion would be—was—accepted by him. An intense and humble reverence for him was uppermost among the contending feelings which had caused her so sleepless a night; her hitherto isolated heart hoped for sympathy, for support, for appreciation from him. But she so worshipped his intellect, his pure high thoughts, his rich store of learning; he seemed so infinitely beyond and above her, on such a different plane of existence, that she expected but the sympathy of a pitier, the support of a superior, the appreciation which is due indifferently to all creation.

There was an unacknowledged vague sense of heart-emptiness through all her dreams. She had impulsively sought, out-of-doors, in the calm early morning, for quiet and mental refreshment, and had partly recovered from a nervous headache, when her father met her with the stern greeting which has been described. A momentary anger was roused, but could not long last in the stronger feelings of which her heart was full. Mr. Harley's eyes were upon her. She felt spell-bound under them; and, heedless of her father's anger, scarcely cognizant of his words, she mechanically left the room as he ordered, and flung herself on a sofa alone, with a sense of bewilderment. The morning hours passed, and her maid came to her with a letter, which she laid on the table. Mildred did not look at it for a moment or two, till the peculiar perfume which floated from it attracted her,—a perfume Stephen had extracted—for he was a skilled herbist—from lime-flowers: he always used it. No reminiscence is so strong as perfume: it renews the feeling of presence more than any other appeal to our senses.

Mildred held the letter for a second unopened,—looking so fixedly on the superscription, that its characters wavered before her. With a stilled heart she slowly broke the seal. She almost forgot her own feelings, her own personality, as she read Stephen's eloquent words. Love is more noble, more beautiful, in proportion to intellect and culture; for it is the complement, the end, of our best faculties,—best fulfilled in their highest sense. Mildred felt abashed in the presence of Stephen's passion. His letter was not the incoherent out-pouring of an overcoming personal emotion: hurried it was, full of short broken sentences, not devoid of repetitions; yet each sentence was a text with a thousand significations,—the repetitions sank into Mildred's heart with intense monotony. Nor is there any more powerful agent on the mind than monotony, especially of sounds, or their proxies, words:—"I have written of myself," he said; "for I think that in so doing I shall be most intelligible to you. I do not approach you with attempted explanation of what I feel towards you: it would be needless. You are my completion; I, yours. In our union will be fulfilled our co-existent perfection. Every physical ordinance is the veil of a spiritual truth. This new, engrossing love; this passion, which so transforms all my being that I cannot comprehend or define its limits, is the Divine message to me of a *nearly grasped attainment*. In the fusion of your soul with mine

lies, also, your attainment of that nameless good for which you so sighingly yearn. Believe me, it is so. Come out from the sensuous crowd; you have no part in it. Dim not your inner vision, angel-clear and keen as it is, in the world's gaslight. But I will not use language of entreaty. By my own resolves and inspirations, I know that you are for ever united with me,—for ever mine. Calmly I receive the truth: already begins to be revealed to me its signification. My soul makes to itself a new world,—a new heaven and earth, glorious and unsullied, are about me. Music, poetry, have fresh meanings. I live in a new element, as different from the dull atmosphere in which I led a chrysalis existence, as fire to water. And is it not so with you? • Before us, what an unbounded future lies! Winged by mutual love, we will pass from height to height. This hope—and if believing hope, fruition—is no boyish enthusiasm, but the well-grounded conclusion of my life. Love is man's finality. This mutual love of ours is the portal to an infinite Elysium, through which nought unperfected may pass; how then, unloving, half existences? I write vaguely, yet what I say will be as clear to you as to me. I shall be absent for some days; I shall not see you before I go, so I write for custom's sake; but you are with me. I see nought but you; feel nought but the last pressure of your hand. All else is indistinct and veiled: my former world is misty as a dream. The depths of heaven are revealed to me through you—to you, through me. In their purple splendours, how dim has become our forsaken past! How much I could write of our future! You will not think, as a shallow and vain girl might, that those thoughts are misplaced in this letter. Nothing true, or good, or beautiful, of things in heaven, or things on earth, is foreign to the subject of which I write: my soul and mind, my life and intellect, are absorbed in this inhalation of the infinite. Entirely I fling myself, and the trivial knowledge gathered during my past, into this new existence. And you, with your school-girl narrowness of thought; your impatient longing for some unknown; your sense of latent power, yet present insufficiency; capabilities for infinite dominion, infinite fulfilment, fettered by your social position, your bounded horizon: are you not like one who has reached a mountain platform, after long struggling in its cleft sides? We stand in divine sunlight among the stars: *we are far from the smoke and din of the world: beauty and purity clothe all around. Here will we make our dwelling*

place, while yet we are mortal. I feel a happiness bewildering as the thought of God ; crushing as the sense of his presence. I shall return in a few days. Farewell ! yet I will never leave you."

There was neither address nor signature to this letter. In one or two spots tears had dimmed the writing—Mildred's silent, rapturous tears ; like drops which sometimes fall in summer heats from the clear glowing sky. Passive, becalmed, she lay there on the sofa. Hours passed by like minutes, for her heart was filled with but the one thought, as one might be, gazing on the unflecked uppermost. The mysticism, the demi-god exaltation of Stephen's letter, she did not think of. His interpretations were insignificant to her ; her woman's heart sought no farther than that he loved her : that he was so noble-thoughted, so eloquent, enhanced the value of his love ; but as abstract qualities they were nothing to her. Her past was equally passed with his ; but she did not, as he, receive her present with reference to her future—she looked not beyond it ; she did not consider the possible or the probable. Very sensitive, with vividest fancy and an undisciplined mind, it was not strange that her first experience of the passion-storms of life should so affect her. Her youth had been spent in vague aspiring : on every side limits of most uncongenial customs and education-maxims had shut in her active mind, her strong beating heart. Music had been to her a business of finger-dexterity, of fashionable masters and social drudgery ; drawing mere imitation, whether of art or nature. She had read standard works in the four languages with which she was conversant, and given to them a cold impersonal approval. Of modern poetry she knew much ; her natural taste and good ear taught her to admire the sound of what was musical—the excellence of what was graphic ; but she had made none of it her own : the chords of her own soul were yet untouched : its life was dormant ; she had not yet gathered the scattered voices of stray facts into the mellow fugue, so to speak, wherein they should be held. She had continually revolted against the pettinesses which surrounded her, without any exact hope or knowledge that there was greater nobleness in other hearts, or that the burning words she met in books were other than dreams of an ever unrealised desire. How wonderful was, to her, the acquaintanceship with Stephen Harley. And then the birth of love in her : *the assurance of his.* It was a tropical sunrise on her silent

night: all nature became animate; morning and evening rose on her with mystic meanings, as to our first parents ere the fall: the bright-eyed flowers, the sighing odorous winds, the murmur of the silvery fountain, seemed the utterance and forms of her rapturous thoughts. What new truths flashed on her mind from the pages she had so often ignorantly criticised! what wild heart-histories were revealed to her in the music which had been hitherto but a study. Heroism; noble deeds; infinite virtue; seemed a necessity to her. Truly, as Stephen said, she had entered the portals of Elysium. Possessed by love, though of a transient and human kind, it was her golden age: the moment given to some, when they are in harmony with God and Nature; when all is fair and beautiful to them, and the momentary good accompanies the momentary love. It is sad that the Eden-glimpse should commonly be so rare, so short, so soon clouded: that to the golden time should succeed that iron one, of sordid thoughts, and darkened vision, and hard hearts.



CHAPTER XXXII.

"Man is not life, but is only a recipient of life from the Lord, who, as he is Love itself and Wisdom itself, is also Life itself; which life is received differently by every one, according to his quality and consequent state of his reception."—SWEDENBORG.

HERBERT sat in his room: shadowy dreams filled his mind; pale hopes, chased by haunting doubts; longings, rather than intentions, for his future; visions, brilliant, while they were yet indefinite, but vanishing like mirage when he sought to base a well-grounded hope on their moribund promise. A servant brought in luncheon on a tray: cold grouse and Burgundy. Herbert watched with indifference the displacing of the books on his writing-table,—the little arrangements for his comforts which were made by his servant. "Lord Clancahir has just arrived, sir, and wishes to know if you would like to see him," he said, when all was arranged.

"Clancahir!" exclaimed Herbert; "when did he come? Is he here or at Erlesmere? Is Lady Effingham below? Has he come to stay, Richardson?"

"He is at luncheon with the ladies, sir: he came by rail this morning; I believe from London."

"Quick, give me my coat; stay, I can't get this arm in. Try my grey shooting jacket. Why in the world don't you make haste!"

"Now just be quiet, my dear fellow, and eat your luncheon: here I am," Lord Clancahir said, cheerily, as he came in.

"My dear Clancahir!"

"You see I came sooner than I said, for I had business in London."

"All right; but——"

"But here you are, not able to be hospitable."

"Oh! I'll go home this afternoon."

"I think not; I am already established here," said Lord Clancahir. "You are in pain, I see," he continued.

"Very little."

"How you do get into scrapes, old fellow."

"When did you come over?" asked Herbert, a little abruptly.

"Tuesday. I must return on Saturday. I think I shall take you with me; our Irish air will set you up again: you have had a shake."

"Oh! I intend to be very busy at home. I am going to see my factor in half an hour about farm buildings: see, here are the plans."

Lord Clancahir looked at them. "This is all very well, Erle; but——"

"I do not admit the word 'but,' Clancahir," said Herbert, with a faint smile.

"You will dine with us downstairs, of course?"

"I can't get on a coat."

"We'll cut the sleeve of one, and tie it on with ribbon: see," and in a second Lord Clancahir had opened the seam; his thin slight fingers were very dexterous.

"Seriously, Clancahir, if I can get a coat on I must go home."

"That is very disappointing; and, besides, quite impossible. Sir Harry is engaged to a Conservative dinner at Holmvale, and you must not leave me *en tiers* with Lady Effingham and her daughter."

"Very well; but to-morrow."

"Is nothing as yet: to-day is the only reality. Now I am going to ask Miss Effingham's maid to have ribbon ties sewn on this sleeve." Herbert rang the bell, and expressed his wish to have ribbons sewn on.

"So that is achieved," said Lord Clancahir. "Do you know you have grown very obstinate since you left Ireland?"

"Very wavering, perhaps."

"Harley is not here, is he?"

"He went this morning."

"I heard in London that there is to be certainly a general election next spring. I suppose you are pretty sure of Holmvale?"

"Perhaps I am, if I stand."

"Why, has anything happened to make you change your mind?"

"Nothing tangible; but——"

"I thought 'buts' were not admitted in your vocabulary."

Herbert turned restlessly away. "What business have I in Parliament?" he said in a low voice.

"We settled all that at Cahirmore. You are ill and out of spirits, Erle: believe that you will be of use, and you will be."

"Easily said," replied Herbert, bitterly; "but I believe the contrary."

"Good heavens! how mistaken Harley is!"

"Perhaps so; but what has that to do with Holmvale?"

"Much: he has made you think that you are a unit in the world."

"Truly, so I am."

"Individual, not a unit. We are all leaves of one great tree; which of us can say he has not his office, though he may grow alone on his twig.

"Poor leaf!"

"But if he freely admit the life-giving sap, he will not only gain strength and beauty; the branches around will put forth leaves and flowers."

"Ah! Clancahir, if it were true!"

"Is not Christianity true?"

"It is an affair of dogmas, not of this work-day life. We don't receive it like an influx: we try to grasp it painfully, and with an effort keep our hold. It is a labour, not a rest: I am not strong enough for labour."

"Do not labour. What are your thoughts but an influx? And one's self is the deposit left by continual waves of thought. Christianity is simple acknowledgment of the Divine influx. The consequences of that acknowledgment classified, form the Catholic creed——. Here is your coat. See, that's all right now."

"Lady Effingham has sent me to say, my lord," observed the servant, "that she will be in the Cloister walk, if you should wish to join her and Miss Effingham."

"Very well. Now, Erle, you look a different fellow. The sunshine without will finish your metamorphosis."

"Ah! that depends on sunshine within."

"Should you like perpetual sunshine?"

"My dear Clancahir, I have done with Utopias."

"If there were not a true Utopia, we should never have imagined one."

"You hold out impossible hopes of a heaven on earth."

"The presence of God is heaven. Eighteen hundred years ago He came among us."

"And left us."

"And returned."

"Are you orthodox, Clancahir?"

"At least, I am a Christian."

"What an indefinite definition?"

"Men have made it so, perhaps. The Christian principle I believe to be a re-conjunction of Man with Good and Truth, by a continual Divine influx of those essences."

"You talk mystically."

"A perfecting of the human by the fusion of the Divine; of which the God-man was the great witness."

"'Perfecting of the human.' Those are Stephen's words."

"He believes it is the result of a completed personality; I, that it is only attainable by a childlike, free receptivity."

"Stephen would make his own sun; you warm yourself by that in the heavens."

"And his is a gas-light.—But do put on that coat of yours, and come out."

"You bring me into ideal sunlight, Clancahir."

"Of Miss Effingham's society?" Herbert put out a sudden energy in the completion of his toilet. They were not long in finding Lady Effingham and Mildred.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Hers will I be: and only with this thought
Content myself, although my chance be nought."—*SUNSET.*

A DOUBLE row of lime-trees standing at either side of a broad gravelled terrace gave to it the name of the Cloister walk.

Their interlacing branches formed a tracery suggestive of a florid cathedral roof, but surpassing any in its intricate delicacy. Far down the arched perspective stood Lady Effingham and Mildred. Their graceful forms and sheeny dress were thrown out in brilliant relief against the grey tones of the lichen-stained boles. "I am beginning at last to admire Miss Effingham," Lord Clancahir said, as he and Herbert walked to meet the glimmering figures.

"Are you?"

"She is a woman now: she was but a child when I was here a month ago."

"I see no change."

"Perhaps you have grown with her growth. It must be so," added Lord Clancahir, looking with a slight curious smile at his companion, "or you would see what I mean. Her very walk is different. She has lost the air of self-consciousness. There is the repose of completion about her. She has become as graceful as her mother; yet how different!"

"Lady Effingham has all that you have been praising," said Herbert, with effort.

"Her grace is the perfection of art; her daughter's the fulfilment of nature. Dalilah and Eve."

"Was it not imprudent of you, dear Herbert," said the Dalilah in question, as she warmly greeted him, "to come out without leave?"

"He had mine," interposed Lord Clancahir. "Lady Effingham, I want you to show me your conservatory. I am collecting ideas for one at Cahirmore, and I am sure beforehand that yours is perfect."

"It is quite near," said Lady Effingham. "Bertie, you must not tire yourself. And you, too, dearest child, you have looked pale since yesterday." She passed on. Lord Clancahir's manner was ever charming, and her social refinements expanded under his influence. Her liking for whatever seemed graceful or beautiful was shared by him. He pleased her personally, for Lady Effingham had refined perceptions as to externals.

"I trust you are not the worse for my awkwardness yesterday," said Herbert hurriedly, and with embarrassment, to Mildred.

"Thanks, I was not hurt. I fear you were. It was very *kind of you to risk so much for me.*" Her voice was *strangely low and sweet.* Herbert's heart beat quickly.

"The risk was nothing, if I had only been of some use." Mildred remained silent. Withered leaves fell on their path. A shadow seemed to rest on Herbert: he felt chilled.

"This 'Géant de Batailles' is flowering late," said Mildred, as they emerged from the dim light of the cloistral walk to the rose garden. She cut off one of the crimson blossoms and gave it to her companion. "I am not worthy of it. I shall never be a Paladin," said Herbert, with an uncertain smile, "Cecil would better deserve it."

"His battles do not much interest me: I do not admire strategy. Besides, his objects seem to me scarcely worth fighting for."

"Don't you think success in public life—the applause of party, worth achieving? To be a distinguished *littérateur*?"

"I hardly know," Mildred replied, absently.

"I sometimes have wished I were Cecil. He has a career before him."

"Is a career so necessary?"

"Do you not think so? To work for some end."

"Ah! that is a man's ambition."

"I fancied that of all people you were most ambitious."

"I believe I used to be."

"Used to be! Why I am older than you are, Mildred, and yet I am but on the threshold of life. It is a strange moment."

"An important moment, dear Herbert," she replied, with a tenderness of manner very new to her.

"I have great projects," he said: "aspirations almost too high to hope that they will be fulfilled, and I so fear disappointment."

"Disappointment might be terrible," said Mildred with a shiver.

"You said yesterday you feared nothing."

"To fear much one must hope much. But do not let us talk about ourselves, Bertie."

"Ah! Mildred, if you would talk more of yourself. If I only knew you better!"

"Our hermit spirits dwell apart."

"Do you, then, also say that it must be ever so? It cannot be, Mildred. Oh! if you knew how I long for sympathy."

"You will find it some day—sympathy," Mildred said, low and earnestly, with a tremulous softness, the very voice of love. Its tone thrilled through Herbert almost painfully.

"The sun has set; do not stay out of doors any later, dearest," said Lady Effingham, who, at the moment, joined them with Lord Clancahir.

The evening was very dreamlike to Herbert—one of those happy dreams which surpass waking enjoyments, in that no sense of incompleteness, of impending change, dims their brilliance. A meaningful beauty lay like sunshine on the most work-day objects: all sounds grew tuneful and harmonious. His soul was like still water, wherein were reflected the stony shore and stunted trees, and long grey fields of common life, with a strangely beautified resemblance. Once during that evening a momentary disturbance ruffled the calm, and the circumstances mirrored there grew suddenly distorted. Herbert had asked Mildred to sing, and she had pleaded fatigue: his friend asked for a special song, and she acceded. But Lord Clancahir did not stand beside her at the piano; and as her full notes rose on the heavy-weighted air, a hushed religious calm again descended on Herbert's heart. Silence fell on all when she had done. There was no well-intoned joy, no simulated despair, to be commended: her song was sacred, and beyond criticism, as a psalm might be. That evening her soul had found utterance: hitherto her music had been imitation; now it was inspiration. "That 'Addio' is too charming," said Lady Effingham, the first to speak; "but, Milly, I think you dragged it a little. What do you say, Lord Clancahir?"

"I never criticise," he replied.

"How strange! I should have imagined you fastidious."

"'La morte vera amica, ci dà la libertà.' Do you agree in what you have just sung, Miss Effingham?" he asked, turning to Mildred.

"I cannot," she replied, rather timidly.

"Ah! dearest, you are too young," said Lady Effingham, with a little sigh of *ennui*. "I fear Harry will be rather late."

"I suppose he will have to speak," observed Lord Clancahir.

"He will probably say something: he likes keeping up his influence in the borough."

"You ought to have gone," said Lord Clancahir, turning to Herbert.

"I, oh! yes. I beg your pardon. You were saying——"

"That you ought to have made a speech at Holmvale to-night."

"About what?"

"Yourself."

"My sprained wrist?"

"That would have made an excellent beginning. Then, by an easy transition, you could have gone to the dislocation of classes; the powerlessness of the agricultural party, which may be called the right arm of the State; and wound up by a pathetic picture of the time when you hoped to wield yours in the service of the 'true and independent.'"

"I think I hear the hall door open," exclaimed Lady Effingham. Then—

"My dear Harry, how cold you must be!"

"Not the least," he replied, though he brought in with him a frosty atmosphere, which made Herbert shiver.

"Lord Clancahir has joined us, you see."

"Very glad. I wish you had been with me this evening, Clancahir," Sir Harry said, with an unusual smile of elation. "They gave me a good reception. There is no fear for Cecil, I think."

"Have you, then, retired from the field, Erle?" Lord Clancahir asked, turning to Herbert.

"I have not quite made up my mind."

Sir Harry looked at the fire. After a pause, he said, sternly: "I have promised my support to Cecil. I think, by education, principles, and talents, he is better fitted to represent any votes I can command than his brother."

"Pray settle the question in the morning; it is very late," interposed Lady Effingham. Sir Harry lighted the candles for her and his daughter, and bid them good night coldly. After a moment of embarrassing pause, Herbert followed their example, and went to his room.

"I cannot understand, Clancahir," Sir Harry said, "why you should have for a moment thought that that poor fellow should stand for Holmvale instead of Cecil."

"I think, if talent and principles signify at all, which is an open question, he is better qualified than his brother."

"You cannot mean what you say."

"Cecil will, doubtless, represent himself very creditably; in fact, that department of his duties will probably absorb his energies."

"Herbert is incapable even of that," said Sir Harry, with some bitterness.

"His Quixotic generosity and scrupulous unselfishness is *really* unfortunate," said Lord Clancahir, musingly. "Per-

haps you are right after all, Sir Harry, in fearing that he would not be a good representative for Holmvale. You command about an equal number of votes, do you not?" Sir Harry stiffly assented, and immediately afterwards proposed that they should postpone the discussion to another day. "Before we mar our present agreement," added Lord Clancahir, as he shook hands cordially with his half-astonished, half-offended host. He went at once to Herbert's room. Herbert was pacing up and down, his head bent down a little, his slight hands clasped tightly together behind his back.

"You see how it is," he said, hurriedly, when his friend had closed the door.

"Your uncle is an obstinate, prejudiced, old soldier."

"I think he is right, Clancahir. You are kind-hearted, and you try to make me over-estimate myself. That, however, is as miserable a plan as Stephen's, who would have me under-estimate, or not estimate at all, every one else."

"When do you expect Cecil over?"

"I know little of his movements."

"A good deal depends on him."

"Nothing!" exclaimed Herbert; "unless, indeed, that his coming determined me all the more to oppose him."

"Erle, this is childish, absurd: I never saw this side of your character before."

Herbert leant against the mantelpiece; his face was shaded by his hand. "Will you, too, give me up, Clancahir?"

"Will you be true to yourself?"

"That is a phrase; what do you mean by myself?"

"The Divine in you."

"Clancahir, I am sick of these mysticisms. I want some practical advice, and you put me off with a fine-sounding jargon of words, like Stephen."

"The God-inspired instinct of what is good in you," continued Lord Clancahir, calmly, and as if he had not been interrupted; "that spring of living water, ever sufficient for your necessity, ever increasing with your thirst."

Herbert was silent for a moment. He replied, with less irritation than before: "It is all very true in theory; but, in any case, I can't see what you call my Divine instinct has to do with Holmvale."

"I thought your object in standing was to try and become a less idle unit in the world than you are now. Apparently, it is to keep Cecil out of Parliament."

"You are unjust," returned Herbert bitterly. "I know not if it is by 'Divine instinct' that you judge so uncharitably."

"We will not scold each other like women, my dear Erle. Now, to be practical. I think only peculiar circumstances should make you forego standing for Holmvaie; but it would not do to inflict serious injury on Cecil. From what Lady Effingham told me this afternoon, his prospects seem to depend on his getting into Parliament next election."

"But you have been persuading me to stand."

"And so you should, unless Cecil shows very good cause indeed; better than I fancy he can. You must find out his views. As I said, a good deal depends on him."

"But, Clancahir, is it right to waive my responsibilities because by so doing I may advance his interests? Is it right to put him in the position I ought to take myself?"

"Is it beautiful?" asked Lord Clancahir, taking up his candle to go.

"You would not put mere feeling before a moral sense!"

"I think it is the safer guide in questions of action. Our moral sense is well as a curb, but love for whatsoever is good should prompt our onward way. You see, morality is a torch which shows you pitfalls at either hand, but love is a sun lighting up the whole landscape. Now, after inventing these similitudes, I must go to bed."

"Stay a minute, Clancahir. You preach new doctrine: you trust to impulse rather than conscience!"

"I think love, rather than fear, should govern us. Is that new?"

"Not theoretically new."

"It is the Irish faith, I think—not the English. Good night."

"Stay a little."

"Not another second: language and discussion dilute thought; I will say no more."

The candle burned to its socket, the fire went out, the night air grew heavy with silence, before Herbert lay down.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Thy mother sits beside thee, beside thee, yet apart;
And she is ice, but thou art fire, with a throbbing poet-heart.
Thy mother is not cruel—no, thy mother is but cold;
And knows the power of wealth and dower, and loves the glittering
gold."—BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

"How is your wrist, Bertie?" Lady Effingham asked, when family prayers were over next morning.

"Better, thanks," he said, but he looked pale and harassed. His manner was, however, calm; his voice firm.

"You will shoot, Clancahir?" Sir Harry half commanded, half inquired.

"I have not time, I fear. We are going over to Erlesmere; are we not, Erle?"

"If you like. Dickson wants me to go to Holmvale to-day, to see after my estate there," he replied, looking at a note from his factor, which lay among his letters.

"But your wrist, dear Bertie," said Lady Effingham.

"Perhaps Clancahir will drive me over. I have ordered my phaeton to be here at eleven."

"Wilful man will have his way!—and the doctor——"

"Will find that I have taken his case out of his hand," interposed Lord Clancahir.

"Dickson is rather fanciful, Herbert," Sir Harry observed, drily; "I don't recommend you to follow his advice implicitly."

"I will try to judge for myself."

"Pray do not read letters at breakfast time," said Sir Harry to his daughter.

"You have not many correspondents, Milly," said her mother; "who in the world has written you such a long letter?"

"It is from Cecil."

"Harry, do you know that poor dear Lady Mary has lost her aunt who was so kind to her?" Lady Effingham observed, adroitly withdrawing attention from Mildred's correspondent.

"So I heard yesterday."

"And Mr. Harley's cousin or uncle, or whatever he was, is dead."

"So I heard yesterday."

"Has he left him anything?"

"I have not heard."

"You are very oracular this morning, Harry."

"I have had a short letter from Stephen," said Herbert, "written in great haste, and rather enigmatical."

"May I try to guess the enigma? I am very ingenious," said Lady Effingham.

"Certainly," he replied, as he gave her the letter; "it puzzles me." Mildred grew suddenly pale, then crimson flushed. She said something incoherently about having done breakfast, and the heat of the fire at her back.

"I arrived here," Mr. Harley wrote, "in time to receive the farewell of my cousin. He has left me a considerable sum of money. It will be to me, I think, the golden key of an inexhaustible treasury, containing wealth such as the world never yet gave. Business detains me here, but on Tuesday I shall be with you. Yours, STEPHEN HARLEY."

"He should have marked his letter private," said Lady Effingham, musingly, as she returned it without farther comment to Herbert.

"Unless he has turned alchemist, and means to employ this bequest in a search for the philosopher's stone, I do not understand his evident excitement."

Every one had risen, and Lady Effingham said no more. Mildred went to her room. Herbert and his friend started for Holmvale. Sir Harry shut himself up with his steward in his study, where he examined his week's accounts, arranged his correspondence, docketed his papers, and settled the compartments of his despatch-box, with a care and method sufficient for the ordering of a nation's affairs. The house was very quiet, and even Lady Effingham's canary bird sat hushed on his perch, as with eye askance he watched his mistress's thoughtful smile. Her left hand held a half-sheet of crumpled paper open; the other played with a pen-handle, which fell among a group of writing-table prettinesses with a clatter. Lady Effingham awoke from her reverie; she rose and rang the bell. "Tell Benson to see if Miss Effingham is in her room, and to beg of her to join me here if she is." Again, with a slight smile, she looked through some lines which were written on the crumpled paper. Miss Effingham entered. Lady Effingham's countenance at once assumed a grave, pained expression. She pointed to a chair. Mildred sat down. "I have to speak to you, dear child, on a very painful subject." Miss Effingham remained silent. "I did not

expect deceit and underhand dealing from you, Mildred; you have been encouraging the forwardness of that adventurer, Mr. Harley." Mildred grew white as marble; her lips livid. "Entered into some clandestine engagement, I dare say," said Lady Effingham, bitterly. "Pray don't look as if you were going to faint: I hate scenes. May I ask how long this disgraceful folly on your part, and presumption on his, has been going on?" Mildred remained still and silent as a statue. "You may have inclination, but you have not talents, for intrigue," continued Lady Effingham. "Even if I had not found this singular production"—she pointed to the crumpled bit of manuscript—"you betrayed yourself at breakfast." Mildred's cheek flushed suddenly as she glanced at the paper. It contained some lines written by her the preceding night in a moment of intensest enthusiasm. "In any circumstance, these verses were most unbecoming a young girl; but written of a needy schemer, who has privately sought to instil these shamefully wrong notions into your mind! it is inconceivable!"

"It is untrue, you know it is!" exclaimed Mildred, her voice broken by anger.

Rising from her chair, she stood before her mother with quivering lip and flashing eyes, wildly beautiful as a panther.

"Do not behave like a tragedy queen: sit down. How can you explain these very fervid lines?"

"I will give no explanation to you. I say again, that all you have said of Mr. Harley is false; and you know as well as I do that he is incapable of deceit."

"Am I to understand, then, that your love for him is unprovoked, unreturned?"

A gleam of happiness flashed on the lowering clouds which shadowed Mildred's brow. She sat down again, calmly, as she said,—*"It is true that we love each other: we will continue to do so."*

"Possibly," said Lady Effingham, coldly: "but you will not meet again."

"It is not in your power to hinder us."

"Mildred, if you are obstinate, I must speak to your father; you know his views."

"My father is severe; he is not cruel."

"Consider your position, your age. This man is in no way a fitting husband for you. Have you thought, Mildred? *He is, besides, a Deist—an Atheist, for aught I know!*"

"He was the first to teach me truth."

"Has there been any clandestine correspondence?"

"I have never written to him."

"He has to you?—Insolence! Mildred, I command you to give me his letter."

"I will not."

"Mildred, I do not wish for an unpleasant appeal to the means of coercion I have at my disposal." Miss Effingham trembled violently. "If you delay, I shall resort to them. I will desire Benson to search your room. I will have your locks opened."

"There is no need," said Mildred. She took Stephen's letter from her pocket-book, glanced at it, and put it in the fire. She regained her seat uncertainly, as one suddenly blinded. There was a silence for a minute. Lady Effingham, though annoyed, was perfectly self-possessed. "You have forestalled my intention," she said, coldly: "go to your room, I will see to these matters." Mildred did not move nor reply; she had fainted. She recovered slowly. Her mother sprinkled her forehead with eau-de-Cologne, and watched her revival with some concern and much perplexity. Her educational method had provokingly failed. Her daughter—Lady Effingham's daughter—had grown up with strong and unregulated passions, with undisciplined principles and obstinate will. It was extremely unaccountable. Mildred opened her eyes: her pallor changed to an angry blush. With an effort she rose and moved towards the door. "Do not excite yourself," said Lady Effingham, softly; "do not be in a hurry to form any resolution. On Monday, I will speak to your father about discontinuing Mr. Harley's visits. If you will pledge yourself to hold no further intercourse with him, I will take care that you are not distressed by any recurrence to this unfortunate affair. Let it be a dream, dear child." She took her daughter's hand: it lay passive in hers. "We will drive this afternoon," she said, coaxingly. A sullen scorn glared in Mildred's eyes. "It will be good for you, dearest," continued Lady Effingham.

"Not good," exclaimed Mildred, with sudden energy, "for either! Not good for you to bend me to your worldly schemes, to use your mother's authority, and compel me to listen to heartless maxims. I do not wish to have the little truth, and faith, and love I possess, blighted. It is not good for me to grow reckless, to hate where I should love. Some light had

dawned upon me : I would not sink again into darkness. I *will* not !” she exclaimed, with clasped hands, and eager utterance—“I will not give up my first and only happiness—my life; for I never lived before !”

“You are perfectly unintelligible; but this galimatias sounds as unladylike as it is ridiculous. Calm yourself until Monday, at all events. You had better go to your room now.” With a suddenly-recovered proud composure Mildred went to her room. She flung herself on the first chair that offered, in a trance of stormy passion, too intense for commonplace expression : yet the dilated eyes, the livid colour, the half-opened mouth and set teeth, the prominent veins and sunken cheeks, betokened the strife within her.

O selfish, narrow-hearted mother ! O passionate, unchild-like daughter ! We will not further unveil the sorrowful picture.



CHAPTER XXXV.

“ Now sette wel thyne entencion,
To here of love the discripcion.

* * * * *

Delite righte, fulle of hevynesse,
And drieried, fulle of gladnesse ;
Bitter swetenesse and swete erreure,
Righte welle savour, d good savour ;
Synne that pardonn hath withynne,
And pardonn spotted without with synne.”—CHAUCER.

LADY EFFINGHAM paid some visits in the afternoon : one of condolence to Lady Mary de Broke ; of ceremony to the newly-come doctor's mother ; of inquiry to the rector's wife, who had had an apoplectic fit. Her little pug sat beside her in Mildred's vacant place,—solemn and stern of aspect, erect and observant of the passing objects, scorn and indignation alternated in the expression of his visage. Different from his mistress, who nonchalantly leant back ; except now and then, when she half rose to give a kindly greeting to an admiring but gaping school child ; or a courteous bow and smile to the village attorney ; or a passing word to the awkward son of a neighbouring squire. That long-legged stripling went on his way afterwards in the proud consciousness of manhood : *he was authoritative* to his sisters that evening, and secretly *ashamed* of them, because they were not more like Lady

Effingham. She stayed awhile at her school, and was very particular about the arithmetic. Lady Effingham had a clear head: she lingered over the plain work, and gave the girls a little lecture in her kindest voice, so that they were quite overawed by her soft low accents. They forgot to curtsy when she passed out, as one would forget to say good day to an angel; indeed, the little ones were not clear but that she was one: her sheeny dress, the perfumed atmosphere which came into the stuffy school-room with her, and the music made by her rustling silks and little clinking chains and bracelets—like that of a summer shower—had so impressed them. She paused as she drew on her driving-gloves, for the merry trot of horses rang along the road. Lord Clancahir and Herbert came up. "Have you done with business?" she asked, as they stopped.

"Quite," said Herbert.

"We are henceforth your slaves," added Lord Clancahir.

"My ponies are rather fractious; will you help me to drive them? Herbert, you will come too? Philip will take your phaeton home."

"Certainly. Judge Jeffries shall sit in my lap," replied Lord Clancahir.

"What a name for my Jugurtha! Are you comfortable, Herbert?"

"Very."

"Where is Miss Effingham?" asked Lord Clancahir.

"Milly was not very well: her head ached, poor child. But what have you been doing? Canvassing, Bertie?"

"For Cecil?"

"Or yourself?"

"I must wait for his return to decide. Do you know when that will be?" asked Herbert, with a slight effort. Mildred heard from him to-day, did she not? Did he mention his plans?"

"I really forget: let me see, Mildred did not show me the letter." Herbert's brow contracted; but he sat behind, and Lady Effingham did not observe his air of chagrin: he imagined that Mildred's headache was in some way the consequence of Cecil's letter.

"Do you know, I am in a very awkward predicament," said Lady Effingham, smiling; "I shall not know on which side to throw my very powerful influence if you stand, Bertie."

"Have you a doubt?" asked Herbert, playfully; but there was a quiver in his voice.

"Let me see: you must first give me some idea of your political views, and what colour you will choose for cockades—blue, yellow, or pink?"

"The subjects being equally important," added Lord Clancahir.

"Are you Harryite or anti-Harryite? I will decide your colour accordingly."

"I fear I agree with few of Sir Harry's principles."

"But have you any of your own?"

"A great many aspirations: I hope he has no principles," added Lord Clancahir.

"I am not quite such an Orientalist as you are, Clancahir. I cannot help perceiving that there is a present as well as a future. You Irish throw yourselves into the imagined coming and forget the existing."

"It is the Eastern mode of thought."

"Pink must be your colour, Bertie," said Lady Effingham, with decision.

"I think blue," suggested Lord Clancahir. "Pink is not a colour; it signifies nothing: it is but a feeble red."

"What do you say to white?" asked Herbert.

"The colour of death!" said his friend. "No, blue is your fit ensign,—blue, which signifies aspiration, purity, religion."

"But Harry will pre-engage blue—true blue: it is the Tory colour."

"Opaque, perhaps. But sky blue represents Tory-Radicalism—upward tending reform; red is demagogue agitation—socialism; yellow, the money interests; green——" But they had reached Effingham House. Sir Harry stood in the portico.

"I have heard from Cecil by the second post," he said; "he will be here in three weeks' time at farthest."

"Will you come to my room and have a cup of tea?" Lady Effingham asked, turning to the young men. Lord Clancahir accepted the proposal, but Herbert excused himself. The autumn moon was rising over the woods: he longed for its cool influence; he felt restless and fevered. Drawing a felt hat low on his brow, he struck into the dusk mazes of Lady Effingham's pleasure-ground. Here and there a sparkling fall of moonlight crossed the path, and threw silver spray on the *sheeny* laurels and the thorn-tipped holly leaves. There was a hush of common sounds. Herbert's footfalls on the

soft sward of the grass walks scarcely broke the silence. He grew more restless, more fevered: his life asserted itself with throbbing vehemence in the calm; his thoughts found utterance perforce. When self-consciousness is dormant, soliloquies are sometimes the necessary ventilators of the over-wrought soul; but who could ever record a soliloquy with a hope of being intelligible?—that out-birth of intensest excitement, when our thoughts are quickened to demi-God activity, when all conventional paraphrases are unused. Herbert's words were incoherent; coherence may be a very mundane excellence, yet it is necessary in print. The gong for dressing had sounded some time, when he remembered that there was such an event in the day's history as dinner:—an important one at Effingham, for Sir Harry was particular in the excellence of his *cuisine*. Herbert was a few minutes late, yet he was unobservant of the annoyance of his host. Stronger feelings had neutralised his boyish sensitiveness: he had grown from childhood to man's estate since his return home; he began no longer to think of himself in mere reference to those around him, but of others in reference to him. Stephen's arguments had never wrought in him so strong an individuality as Mildred's society. After all, our feelings and passions govern us far more than intellect; and rightly. Lord Clancahir exerted himself to keep alive the flagging conversation. Lady Effingham was smilingly kind, graciously cordial; but, spite of herself, there were moments when she, too, seemed influenced by the unsociableness of the rest: she did not long delay to retire when dinner was over. "May I go to my room this evening? I have a headache," Mildred asked, rather abruptly, when she was alone with her mother in the drawing-room.

"Certainly not; there is nothing here to increase a headache." Mildred bit her lip: she grew a little pale; then, listlessly turning to the table, she looked over a book of prints.

"How desultory you are; do get some work, Mildred."

"Mother, let me go to bed; I am so wretched." Lady Effingham turned—the imploring voice was so little like her daughter's; she was startled.

"Dear child, you may; but I should like you to command yourself. If the light hurts your eyes, come into the conservatory for awhile: calm yourself." She took Mildred's hand. What was there in the contact that seemed to sting her daughter to fresh life and energy?

"I will go alone," she said, sullenly, as she rose and passed through the heavily curtained door of the conservatory.

The moon had risen high; the fountain gleamed like summer lightning through the tropic growth of a *Datura*. The rippling sound, the soft perfumes, lulled the bitter pain which Mildred was enduring. She sat down on an iron seat opposite the fountain, and a passionate burst of weeping relieved her from the excitement which she had controlled with difficulty in her mother's presence. She leant back in the *abandon* of unwitnessed passion, and large heavy tears dropped fast down her cheeks, ghastly pale in the moonlight. Her head rested against the trellis-work which lined the wall, while a pendant *Datura* blossom kissed her forehead with loving greeting. She would have fainted at the pleasure of its touch, if it had not been so great; but a calm passed on her jarred nerves. She had been strung to an extreme sensitiveness, which prevented self-control, and gave her for a prey to intensest pleasure, keenest pain, in alternating waves. The soft touch of flowers had changed as with a magic power her misery to an equally passionate rapture: it was as an opiate to her mind. She ceased to think even of Stephen, even of herself. And it was all so new! She was so inexperienced, so lonely; and solitariness intensifies feeling. The murmur of the fountain sang voluptuously through the silence; the large leaved tropic plants breathed an atmosphere entrancing—an atmosphere unstirred by heaven breezes, whose weight of perfume bound Mildred as by a spell; while the moon cast unreality on the scene,—the moon, not cold, but true Astarte in her influences, gazing full of passion through the riven clouds, with pale, loving anguish. Mildred's hand lay unnerved by her side; her eyes were shut; she did not feel Herbert's approach. He stood and gazed at her for a moment: utter repose characterised her attitude. At first he thought that she slept; but as he watched her parted lips, her curved nostrils, the blue frontal veins full and throbbing, the quivering eyelids, the pale cheeks hollower and less oval than their wont, he knew that her quietness was not repose. An indefinite fear seized him: he could not bear to look on her thus. He took her hand, it was chill and inanimate; he kissed it reverently, as he would have kissed his mother's brow. She sighed; slowly *consciousness* returned: she shivered. "You are ill, Mildred. *What has happened?*"

"Not ill. I think the perfumes overcame me. Where are they all? Have you been long here!"

"Not a minute. I feared you had fainted. The air is heavy here: it is not good for you. How you tremble!"

"I cannot return to the drawing-room. It is a fine night; I will go out on the terrace."

"Lean upon me, Mildred: dearest, trust to me; you are not strong enough to be alone. There, this fresh air will set you right." They walked for some minutes ere Mildred spoke. Herbert's heart was very full; but, with chivalrous tenderness, he forebore to agitate her by speaking of his love; nor, though tormented by a thousand doubts, would he allude to the emotion under which she laboured. "I will go in now," she said at length; "it is better. Bertie, you have been very good to me. I have no friends; will you be one? I will trust you. God knows, I need advice and help: I am in great perplexity."

"Oh! Mildred, I thank you. All I can do I will. Lean on me, dearest. I am very thankful for your trust: I think I am not unworthy of it. How pale you grow again! Be calm: you shiver so. It is too chill under this moon for you."

The sash of the drawing-room door which opened upon the terrace was thrown up. Lady Effingham spoke. "Where can they be! Pray, Lord Clancahir, take charge of this shawl for Milly; she is sadly imprudent. What a charming night! Shall we go out and look for them?"

"We will join them," said Mildred. "I am able to play my part again. God bless you, Herbert: we had better separate, if I am to be calm."

"This air is certainly a cure for headaches," said Lady Effingham. "You were right to try it, Milly. It is so pleasant, shall we go as far as the cloister walk?"

"I have brought a shawl for you, Miss Effingham," said Lord Clancahir. He wrapped it round her. Her mother and Herbert were already indistinct in the moonlight when the operation was complete.

"You expect Mr. Harley to-morrow?" Lord Clancahir asked. Spite of herself, Mildred started slightly; but she commanded her voice to reply as indifferently as she could—"Not till Monday."

"He is very singularly fascinating."

"Few people think so," she replied, with effort.

"Fascinating just describes the kind of attraction he possesses,—implying danger if his influence becomes too absolute. It is wonderful how the complete antagonism of Herbert's nature to his has preserved him from falling a victim to Mr. Harley's destructive principles."

"You like Herbert very much!"

"His character is but too refinedly beautiful for English life: only *he* could have resisted Mr. Harley's perversions of truth."

"You are harsh," Mildred murmured.

"You would agree with me, Miss Effingham, if you could foresee the evils his teaching would foster. He sins against God, in his self-exaltation; against man, in his boasted scorn of men. He despises the beauty of living: he is pure intellect, devoid of love; for his love is but a creation of his mind—a fantasy."

"It is cold," muttered Mildred; "let us return." She walked fast but unsteadily. They roused Sir Harry from his doze.

"How very silly, Mildred, to go out! And your mother?"

"Is coming in, I think," interposed Lord Clancahir. He placed Miss Effingham on a sofa, shaded from the lamp glare. She did not lean back, but sat white and rigid as a statue; the dark shawl still wrapped round her, her white arms crossed upon her lap.

"What is the matter, Milly?" her father asked, as he chanced to look towards her.

"I have mesmerised Miss Effingham," Lord Clancahir said, quietly.

"Pooh! pooh! what child's play!"

"I will set her right." He took her hand. "Think of me as a friend, Miss Effingham; my influence is not adverse. Be calm: command yourself." He did not release his hold until he felt the rigid muscles of her hand relax; until her pulse beat more evenly, and the colour returned to her white lips.

"You ought to sleep now; you had better lie down."

"I think I will go to my room," said Mildred, dreamily.

"It is best; I will light a candle for you. Good night: sleep well."

"What! off to bed, Mildred! said her father, sleepily.

"I am very tired."

"You should have been a doctor, Lord Clancahir," said *Lady Effingham*, smilingly, on her return. "It was very thoughtful of you to insist on Milly's going to bed."

"It is possible to be a physician without taking out a diploma: I am not an unsuccessful practitioner. As one, let me prescribe utter repose for Miss Effingham."

"You are a very singular person."

"Indeed."

"And rather uncanny. You know everything, and influence every one mysteriously; even my free will is lessened perceptibly in your presence."

"You half expect me to turn into a black poodle while Herbert enacts Faust. But trust me, I am benevolent; and if I have influence, it is gained by belief, not disbelief."

"But you know so much of people's interior; how is that?"

"You ask me!"

"I know by observation, but you by intuition."

"Miss Effingham's mind is as fragile as it is beautiful," said Lord Clancahir, in a low voice. "Be very tender of her, if you must thwart her."

A shade of bitter annoyance overspread Lady Effingham's countenance. "You know all, then."

"Yes; and perhaps, as a bystander, I may appreciate even more than you can the intensity of Miss Effingham's feelings: they will not bear trifling."

"This is a singular conversation," said Lady Effingham, seeking in vain to conceal her chagrin: "perhaps better discontinued; but you must be aware that Mr. Harley's presumption cannot be countenanced."

"I am no judge of such points; but ——"

"There is no alternative in this case," said Lady Effingham, with *hauteur*.

"Can I do anything for you in London?" Lord Clancahir asked.

"You can give a message for me at Hunt and Roskell's; but must you go to-morrow?"

"Very early, I regret to say: I must be in Dublin ere this time to-morrow."

"I wish you could have stayed to meet your old friend, Cecil; but you will come to us soon again?" The pendule struck eleven. Sir Harry reminded Lady Effingham of the lateness of the hour. Very cordially she pressed Lord Clancahir's hand as she wished him good-bye, yet she did not regret that she should not see him again. "So Cecil will return in three weeks," said Lord Clancahir, thoughtfully, as *he and Herbert sat talking in his room before they went to bed.*

“Yes,” he replied, drily, without looking up.

“You will decide then about Holmvale.”

“Yes——”

“Miss Effingham: she needs a friend, Erle.”

“God knows I am one,” murmured Herbert.

“Do more than love her; befriend her. I fear for her. She was fearfully excited to-night.”

“That letter this morning! Clancahir, Clancahir, what am I to do?”

“Be true to yourself,—to her.”

“But do her parents oppose his wishes?”

“Determinately. His fortune—position.”

“Oh God, why was I born!” murmured Herbert, distractedly, as he paced up and down the room: “why, why was I doomed to live!”

“Be calm: help her. Oh, Erle, she is more pitiable than you! she is so undisciplined, so vehement. It is for you to support her, and you can. It is a noble duty: you are equal to it.”

“It is cruel, cruel!” said Herbert, musingly: then more impetuously—“You do not know; you cannot, Clancahir, what you are advising. I will not give up all: I ought not to throw away my life’s happiness.”

“Nor will you, but rather gain it, should the heaviest sacrifice be required; but that may not be. Be noble, Erle: do what is beautiful, God bless you, my dear fellow. Write to me if all goes well; as, perhaps, it will. Come to me, if indeed this trial be before you. I would stay with you if I were not urgently required in Dublin.”

Herbert wrung his hand as he wished him good night. When the door had closed behind his friend he gave way to an agony of grief; he covered his face with his hands to shut out the blaze of the fire, but burning tears trickled fast between his fingers. A thousand wild resolves flared across his mind: momentary determinations to sacrifice his own feelings for Mildred’s sake, obliterated as soon as made, by the returning waves of passion; longing sighs for right guidance in the intervals of his overwhelming emotion; broken words, now of half-unconscious prayer, now of despairing anguish. He had misunderstood his friend: he applied all Lord Clancahir’s words to Cecil; he imagined that Mildred’s agitation was the *consequence* of the letter she had received that morning, coupled with the second one that reached her father in the

afternoon. Remembering the circumstances of his boyhood, it can be imagined what a bitter trial was to him the thought that Mildred was beloved by his brother, and returned his love,—Mildred, his idol, his only hope in life: to whom he had devoted himself with the fervour of his concentrated nature. If it had been another! But that Cecil should step in and rob him of this happiness, as he had done of so many others: he feared the thought, for with it came a rushing tide of frantic hatred to his brother: he recoiled with horror from the whispers of the Evil one. With a cry of anguish, he fell on his knees, and bowed his head convulsively.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

“No man may be amorous,
Ne in his lyvyng vertuous;
But he love more, in moode,
Men for hem silf than for her goode.”—CHAUCER.

“*Hamlet*.—I loved you not.
Ophelia.—I was the more deceived.”—SHAKESPEARE.

LORD CLANCAHIR was to start very early the following day. The morning was still grey when he had finished breakfast. He knocked hesitatingly at Herbert's door, hoping he might still sleep. There was a quick low response: he found his friend sitting at his writing-table, calm, but very pale. “My dear Erle, you have been up all night!”

“I had much to do.”

“And you have done it?”

“I will try to secure her happiness at whatever cost.”

“Adopt our Eastern creed: love beauty; wait in hope; trust in completion; all will be well with you. Adieu.”

Immediately afterwards Herbert heard the sound of his departing carriage. He stood musing for awhile, and then turned to dress for the day. That done, he wrote two notes,—one containing a few lines of excuse to Lady Effingham; and, slowly buttoning his morning coat, he walked lingeringly down stairs. The head housemaid, an old family servant, met him in the corridor. He asked if she had been to Miss Effingham's room. “I have just opened her windows, sir: she is an early riser in general.”

“Not to-day?”

"She is sleeping sound this morning, sir. I think she wants rest, she looks so pale."

"Will you give her this note when she awakes? I am obliged to go home sooner than I expected."

"Certainly, sir." The woman looked surprised: but she took the letter at once to Miss Effingham's room. Mildred still slept heavily: her clustering golden brown hair falling in heavy masses on her arm, which fell lax by her side; her face so pale, yet not white, because of the network of blue veins—so pale that the housemaid listened involuntarily for the slow deep breathing, to re-assure herself that life lay under that excess of quietude. She left the note on Miss Effingham's pillow. It was an hour or more ere she awoke; nor would she then, but for her maid's frequent entreaties and assurances that it wanted only half an hour of prayer time. She slowly roused herself. A vague sense of pain, of mental lassitude, grew upon her as she regained consciousness. Slowly she recalled her position, and her head sank again on the pillow, in utter weariness. The note caught her eye: she opened it with little interest:—"Trust in me. If I can serve you I shall be happy, whatever the service be. I have given up hopes and aspirations I madly entertained. Place entire confidence in me; use me if I can be of use. I go home this morning: I thought it best; but let me hope that you will look on me as a true friend, and command me at your need. I shall see you soon. God bless you, dear Mildred. I pray for your happiness.—HERBERT ERLE."

The paper was wet with tears when Mildred laid it down. Herbert's kindly words seemed to give her strength: an unaccustomed sense of thankfulness soothed her mind. She had hitherto suffered or enjoyed without reference to the Controller of circumstance; but the unselfishness of Herbert's note appealed strongly to her better feelings. She felt inexpressibly grateful to him for his offer of disinterested friendship. But at how great a sacrifice had he been enabled sincerely to write thus,—so great, that even while he made it, it seemed to him too much for his strength; he scarcely ventured to look his position in the face, lest he should repent. Such self-abnegation was the work of his prompting angel, hardly the result of his free will. He walked up and down the terrace under Mildred's window, and scarce could force himself away. Gnawing pain was at his heart, as he hurried through the fields to his gloomy home. A servant brought him breakfast:

he forced himself to drink some coffee, he felt so ill, so exhausted; he grew excited, but not stronger. A thousand fantasies possessed him: his intellect seemed to reel; a noise of rushing waters filled his brain; he cried for help,—that the mere was rising,—the house was tottering, crashing down upon him ——— * * *

He lay on the sofa in his library. The venetian blinds were down; the dusky atmosphere was heavy with the scent of ether. Stephen Harley stood beside him, pale and anxious: his watch was in his hands; he had been counting the scarcely perceptible pulses as they strengthened. Herbert looked vacantly at him. "Is Mildred saved?" he murmured. Mr. Harley started; but recovering himself, he said, "There is nothing amiss, dear Bertie."

"It was a dream, then. God, I thank thee! Oh! Steenie, if you knew the agony of that dream: I thought I had died under it."

"It was but a dream," said Stephen, soothingly.

"But such a thought—that Mildred loved another! that all my life was dark—blighted!——" he shuddered.

"That Mildred loved another," repeated Mr. Harley, slowly. The room had been darkened: Herbert did not note his lividness. "Is she, then, so dear to you," he asked with a constrained, hollow voice.

"So dear! Stephen, if my dream were true I think I could not live. I must not—dare not, think of it! if it were so! But it was a dream: help me to dismiss it, Steenie;" and he smiled with effort.

"Help you to dismiss it? Certainly, of course," repeated Mr. Harley, vaguely. He looked at him: a stain of froth was on Herbert's lips; he was ghastly pale; he had had a fit. Another! Mr. Harley shuddered; but he felt stunned: he could not collect his thoughts. The air seemed stifling him, the walls of the room slowly closing upon him. A moment more and his sensations threatened to become past endurance. "It was a dream," he muttered, hoarsely. "Be calm; sleep if you can: I must leave you."

"Do not go! Don't leave me; that dream will return!"

"I must," repeated Mr. Harley, sternly, as he disengaged himself from the weak grasp of Herbert. He called Herbert's servant, a man who had travelled with them, and was thoroughly trustworthy.

"Take care of your master," he said, as he passed into the

hall : " his life—reason, perhaps—is in danger." He strode fast along the field-path which led to Effingham ; fast under the chestnut shade. It was noon. The startled deer, trotting from their covert, turned and looked upon him as he fiercely put aside the low feathering branches. He did not pause to think ; an uncontrollable impulse hurried him to Mildred's side : a vague idea that he was to see her for the last time haunted him. He had no determinate plans. Thoughts of some appeal to her, some explanation, some approaching end, crossed his mind like shadows. Physically strong, his excitement did not wear out, but rather added to, his energy : he felt equal for all fates,—impatient for action. Strangely metamorphosed philosopher ! " Is Miss Effingham at home ? " he asked, forgetting that his visiting her was a solecism. The footman stared : he returned after a few minutes' delay. " My lady has desired me to inform you, sir, that she will be happy to see you in an hour's time." The answer was *désillusionnante*. " My lady " had answered his inquiry : all was known therefore. He turned away very proudly. Suddenly his past conduct appeared to him extravagance : he had been fooled by the witchery of a young girl's beauty ; he had written mad words, revealing his passing insanity to her ; he had made his weakness public, and earned the scorn of the shallow Effinghams. It struck him for the first time that he had done all this gratuitously. Mildred had never replied to his letter : he knew not how she had received it ; whether she had shown it to her mother in triumphant mockery, as seemed most probable. What was she to him ? A mere creation of his own ; and that *he* should have fallen down and abased himself before an idol of his own silly fancy ! Pride and the self-sufficiency which had been the fostered temper of his life, asserted themselves with all the force of reaction : they had been overborne for a time by his passion for Mildred. Truly, the habit of his life had been for ever laid aside ; its prestige of immutableness had been dispelled ; a new element had been admitted in his circle of thought and belief, that must ever disturb the enforced calm which, in his stoicism, he had attained. But meanwhile his long-cherished theories came back upon him with the overwhelming strength of a wave that returns, though to retreat again. He had hurried from his relative's funeral full of strained hope—longing to complete the ideals his active fancy had created, of sympathy and mutual affection, and domestic happiness. His visions were more exalted, perhaps

than is common, for they received their colouring from his intellectual views; and they were as unreal as the mirage of love ever is. He had framed long conversations with Mildred, planned the details of a Utopian future, and forestalled a thousand ideal goods attainable by union with her. Intoxicated by these thoughts, he opened the library door at Erlesmere. Herbert lay before him in a rigid trance. The current of Mr. Harley's thoughts was changed: in his impressionable state, the incident sufficed to tinge with gloom his radiant anticipations. As he stood and watched the slow returning life, he could not but recal his former habitual views of man's existence and its conditions. Herbert's words, as a flash of lightning might reveal a precipice, had shown him where he stood. He, the contemner of all human sympathies, in love! he who aspired to God-like strength and sufficingness, weakly led by feeling, as a girl might be! he, the guardian, yielding to the folly which had led astray his ward! These thoughts grew definite as he waited until the hour appointed for his interview with Lady Effingham should arrive. It seemed to him almost a disgrace to have visited Effingham on such an errand. He grew sterner, colder, prouder, as the minutes passed away. And Lady Effingham—she was in her morning room when the footman announced Mr. Harley's visit. It was unexpected. She had not looked for the crisis until Monday; but Lady Effingham was equal to all social needs. Much was to be done during the hour she allowed herself; Sir Harry to be formally acquainted with Mr. Harley's presumption, and made to view it in the fitting light; Mildred to be thoroughly subjugated,—by kindness if possible. After all, it could but be a girlish whim, a mistake to be deplored, and severely reprobated; but that could not really affect her daughter's happiness. It was quite a duty to watch over Mildred's future, and to protect her from the designs of unprincipled men like Mr. Harley. With her usual graceful gentleness, she interrupted Sir Harry in his morning's occupations, and asked him, as a matter of little importance, if he could give her five minutes' attention. He dismissed his steward, whose accounts he had been settling, and Lady Effingham began: "I want your advice and decision, Harry. Mr. Harley has been acting very wrongly; he has been trying clandestinely to gain Mildred's affections."

Sir Harry's countenance assumed its most rigid outline: *emotionless and calm, but inexorably severe.* He said, quietly,

"I am not surprised; I always thought him unprincipled. How do you know this?"

"By accident: he has returned, and seeks an interview with Mildred." Sir Harry's face contracted; he remained silent.

"What do you propose to do?"

"He cannot, of course, be permitted to see her. I will speak to him on the subject."

"He has instilled some mischievous fancies into Milly's head. Perhaps it would be as well if she were left in ignorance of his dismissal."

"Do you mean that she has conceived an attachment for him?" asked Sir Harry, with effort.

"A girlish fancy: these things never are serious, if they are at once crushed." He looked at her with a peculiar expression.

"I will see Mildred; pray ask her to come here."

"Of course you will not alter your determination of discouraging Mr. Harley."

"Of course not," Sir Harry replied, impatiently.

"He is not a gentleman—not a Christian."

"I am aware of the facts."

"Is it not a pity to disturb Mildred?"

"I think it my duty," said Sir Harry, in a tone which precluded further conversation.

Lady Effingham went in search of Mildred. She knocked at the door of her room: there was no answer. She gently pushed it open. Her daughter lay on the sofa in the same kind of stupor which had before startled the housemaid that morning. She was dressed in black, which made ghastly the transparent paleness of her features. Rigid and set they were, not distorted by suffering, yet not peaceful in repose. One hand clasped tightly Herbert's note; a book had fallen from the other. Lady Effingham looked at it; it opened at a passage marked in Mr. Harley's handwriting. She laid it gently where it had fallen. She threw the window open: an oppressive silence followed. She opened Mildred's dressing-case, and poured out some sal-volatile, clinking the perfume bottles to dispel the very quietude. Miss Effingham's maid came in; it was a relief. "Will you waken Miss Effingham?" her mother said, as carelessly as she could.

"Dear me! is she again sleeping? My lady, Miss Effingham is not well, I could hardly awake her this morning."

"Put some eau-de-Cologne on her forehead : she is tired." After some minutes, Mildred slowly opened her eyes. She was supported in her maid's arms ; her mother stood behind her.

"Why not let me sleep, Benson ?" she said, with a long-drawn sigh."

"Dearest, it is not natural sleep. Mildred, be yourself. Benson, go into the next room for the present." The maid withdrew.

"My child, your father has sent for you : he wishes to speak to you, to consult with you ; are you strong enough ?" Mildred, with effort, sat upright. She looked at her mother with a strange vacant expression. "Take this sal-volatile, dearest : that is well ; lean upon my arm. Why, how you shiver !" Not a word did Miss Effingham say. She took her mother's arm mechanically : they went downstairs to Sir Harry's room. Her step was heavy and trailing, but firm. Lady Effingham led her to an arm-chair. She sat in it precisely as she was placed—upright, her head stiffly erect, her hands formally composed upon her lap. Sir Harry stood with his back turned to the fireplace ; Lady Effingham aside, in the deep window recess. "Mildred," he said, in a calm low voice, "Mr. Harley has, I believe, asked you to become his wife ?" She remained silent and motionless, except for the quivering of her eyelids. "That I might act with perfect fairness to you, though you have not been equally candid, I have determined to let you know my decision before I communicate it to him." No answer. "I conceive it impossible that you can have given your affection to any person clandestinely,—least of all to one so unsuited in every way to be your husband. Am I right, Mildred ?" She looked at the door with wild distress. A servant came. "Mr. Harley has called again, my lady, and wishes to know if you are disengaged."

"Beg of him to wait awhile in the drawing-room." The man withdrew.

"Do you wish to see him, Mildred, for the last time ; or would you rather not ?"

She paused ; then speaking slowly, rather hoarsely, she said, "It would be of no use. I see you are resolved. I wish it was over." She put her hand to her head with a gesture of pain.

"Will you see him then, Caroline ? I have letters to write for the early post. Mildred, stay with me for a short time."

She had risen, but resumed her seat. Her father walked to the window, then turned, and looked at her with perplexity. "Mildred," he said, after some minutes of embarrassing silence, "be candid with me. I am a soldier, and perhaps over strict with you; but trust me, I have your good more at heart than any other object in the world." Too late! Too late! Why had he never spoken thus to her before? His words touched her, but with anger rather than affection.

"My good!" she replied, almost fiercely; "my success in the world, my creditableness to you, perhaps, but hardly my good. It was not for my good that you made me what I was—shallow, vain, rebellious, unloving. God knows it was because I was not loved; and now——" Her calm deserted her, she covered her face with her hands.

Her father was deeply moved. "I love you, Mildred."

"It is too late to say so. I have no future: I dare not think of the past. I cannot live in the atmosphere of this house. It is like a horrible dream, this mockery of life." Her colour came and went as she spoke.

Sir Harry was much agitated. "I wish I had known you better, Mildred. I thought you frivolous, childish."

"Would God I had been more so!"

"And Mr. Harley!—Mr. Harley has robbed me of my daughter, found too late," said her father with bitter emphasis. "You love him?"

"He found me ignorant and egotistical and vain; he gave me a new life: he showed me beauty, and taught me the new happiness of loving; he stooped from his height, and did for me what neither father nor mother had done."

"It may be too true," murmured Sir Harry; "yet it is a bitter pang. Perhaps he deserves your love and confidence better than we have done; but he has no religion—no birth—no fortune."

"I know what people say of him. I had little hope: of course you could not consent, my happiness being your only object."

"If I consent, Mildred, I shall have sacrificed my life-long hopes, my most cherished plans; but if all you say be true, I owe you a reparation for the past. Still I must be satisfied on some points." A crimson flush mounted to Mildred's temples; then fading, she grew deadly pale, her lips moved, but there was no sound. Sir Harry ran to her; he supported her in his arms, he touched her brow with his lips. By degrees she

recovered the first shock, which so great a revulsion of feeling had caused her. "I thank God, Mildred, this day has had its trials, but it has brought me a great blessing—a child that I can love. I never knew you, or how different the past would have been to both."

"My father!——"

There was a long silence. Thoroughly exhausted, Miss Effingham lay back: her head rested on her father's shoulder, he held her hand in his. Lady Effingham entered. She looked at Mildred with lurking self-gratulation. Sir Harry shifted his place slightly as she came near, but Mildred clung to him. "Dear child, how are you? All is over, Mildred."

"Not over, Caroline. We will reconsider this matter."

She looked at her husband with surprise and a little smiling scorn; then—"There is nothing left for consideration: we have overrated this affair. Mildred misled me,—unintentionally, of course; but I am really glad everything has ended so satisfactorily." Mildred raised herself and gazed on her mother with incredulous, dilated eyes; but she regained composure, for her father pressed her hand.

"It is time to end these misunderstandings, Caroline," he said; "I have withdrawn my objections." He spoke coldly and drily, as was his wont, when inflexibly determined."

"There is no need," said Lady Effingham, gently; "Mr. Harley has acted in a most proper manner, and of his own accord given up his prétensions."

"Father, it is not so!" exclaimed Mildred, breathlessly.

"He had already written this note, when I joined him in the drawing-room," continued Lady Effingham, with unvaried smooth grace of manner; "in fact, he came to apologize for what he called his unconsidered and hasty letter to you." She gave her daughter a note. Sir Harry's brow darkened: he looked with stern inquiry to his wife; but she returned his glance with the utmost composure. Miss Effingham read the few lines Mr. Harley had written, in unmoved calm; then, rising, she gave them to her father, saying—"It is well: I thank you, father: now, all is over." She moved towards the door, but stumbling, she would have fallen, had not Sir Harry caught her. He took her in his arms, for she was inert as if she were a mere automaton. "I should like to go to my room," she said, in the same unnaturally composed manner. He carried her tenderly upstairs, and laid her on the sofa; she sunk back, a dead weight on the cushions.

"All may yet be well," whispered her father.

"Oh yes; all will be well. I am quite well; quite strong. It must be luncheon-time; I must not keep my mother waiting."

In perplexity, Sir Harry glanced at Mr. Harley's letter which he had not had time yet to read. His brow contracted as he looked through it hastily; still more sternly, as, to his surprise, he re-read it. The writing was undoubtedly Mr. Harley's; a small, scholarly hand, peculiar to students who have devoted much of their time to Greek literature. It was hasty but firm, as suited the expressions he had used. He had given way to the storm of pride which had gathered with the vehemence each minute of his delay in the drawing-room at Effingham. He sat down at the writing-table, among the hundred conventional signs of wealth and yet æsthetic ignorance—ornaments without true beauty—beauty deformed by inappropriateness: the very books offended his intellectual taste. A Review lay open beside him; and Mildred's green and gold MS. volume of shallow verses, restored to its prominent position, as a drawing-room appendage, added to his morbid disgust. He took a gold-handled pen nibbed with ruby, a fancy of the day, and wrote quickly:—"DEAR MRS. EFFINGHAM,—I wish to excuse myself—if, indeed, you think the subject sufficiently important to listen to my apology for the unconsidered letter I wrote to you some days since. Calmer reflection has shown me the unsuitableness of the language I then used. I hasten to deprecate your anxiety by candidly acknowledging my mistake. I think I am following the wisest and most satisfactory course in doing so, and I hope to avoid, by thus acting, either a second's annoyance to you, or any mortification to myself. For a time I forgot my life-long determinations and principles; but I have awakened from a dream of folly. I feel the deepest regret for my unpardonable hastiness. Again apologizing for my misconception of our relative positions, I remain, dear Mrs. Effingham, with sincere wishes for your happiness, faithfully yours, STEPHEN HARLEY."

Sir Harry indignantly tore the letter into fragments. "Forget that this man ever existed," he said. "Try to sleep. I must leave you. Are you stronger now? This shall be a forgotten dream."

"Oh! I am perfectly strong: I will smoothe my hair *go down stairs* directly." Her father left her: he was

fied by her words. She was very composed: unnaturally so; but he did not understand the nicer shades of manner. He met Lady Effingham on the stairs. "Stay, Caroline, do not go to her; I wish to speak to you." They went together to his study; he closed the door.

"Caroline, was that letter written before your interview with Harley?"

"Yes; he gave it to me almost immediately, and begged me to read it."

"Can you account for his conduct?"

"He had a fit of temporary insanity, and has recovered."

"Was his manner calm? was he acting under strong emotion?"

"He was rather more disagreeable and contemptuous than usual; very mystic and exalted. I was relieved to find that he took that tone at once, and saved me any scene."

"Is he at Erlesmere?"

"By the bye, he said something about travelling."

"Can you be ready on Tuesday to go to Strathmore?"

"Tuesday! Harry: they do not expect us."

"I will write to-day, if you can be ready."

"Of course, if you wish," Lady Effingham replied. She knew opposition was useless, nor did she wish to offer any. Strathmore was quite charming: dearest Mildred would be better for change of scene! Sir Harry wrote to his friend, Sir James Cameron, an East Indian officer like himself, to announce their fulfilment on the following Tuesday of a long-made engagement. Lady Effingham added a note to Lady Invergarry, a widowed sister, who received Sir James's guests at his autumn shooting parties. Then luncheon was announced. Sir Harry ordered a horse to be saddled for him, but he waited to know if Mildred would appear. She came: she had not looked so well for days, nor walked with so assured a step; her flashing eyes had never been brighter, her colour more richly beautiful. Surprised, but entirely reassured, he mounted his horse Iron Duke, which had come to the door, and rode slowly towards the Grange.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Shy she was, and I thought her cold;
I thought her proud, and fled over the sea:
Filled was I with folly and spite,
While Ellen Adair was dying for me."—TENNYSON.

A DETAIL of the quick-succeeding emotions which by turns swayed Stephen Harley's mind as he hurriedly returned to Erlesmere, would seem unnatural, read in the calm objectivism of a critic's humour. Lady Effingham's frigid courtesy had given yet greater impetus to his pride, and fixed his determination to cast all thought of Mildred from him. Yet, as he passed the gardens, the river bank, where she had so often listened to his eloquent words, where her presence had given increased beauty to the scene, he felt regret that the vision was gone; and, in spite of all his reasoning, his future looked dark and cold. The thought stung him that he might be wrong; that he might, after all, have misconstrued life. But such suggestions were disallowed; crushed ere they had assumed any tangible form: crushed, but they were not to be entirely suppressed; fast and faster they rose; weaker grew the struggles of his adopted philosophy. The dark *façade* of Erlesmere house showed through the giant dusky trees. He remembered Herbert: he thought of him as he had left him—pale, disturbed. He quickened his steps, and went with haste to the library. Herbert was not there. An open Bible lay on the table; on the margin, over against a verse of Isaiah, was written, "Clancahir's creed and mine. Sept. 14, 184—." Mr. Harley closed the book hastily, impatiently: he rang the bell and asked for Mr. Erle. "He is gone out, sir, about half an hour."

"My watch has stopped; what time is it?"

"A quarter-past two, sir."

"So late! I shall want some one to carry up my luggage to the cross roads in time for the coach at three o'clock."

"Very well, sir." Mr. Harley made some trifling preparations, and wrote a few lines to his ward before he started. When he had finished, the hour for the coach to pass was near at hand: he sent for Herbert's own servant.

"Did your master seem better before he went out?"

"Much better, sir; he was quite calm. I begged of him to rest at home to-day, but he said he had much to do about

the new farm, and that he must go out : he was weak and pale."

"Weak and pale ! Richardson, is my luggage gone ?"

"Yes, sir. My master desired me to inform you, when you should return from Effingham, that he wished to see you on special business." The mention of Effingham determined Mr. Harley. Again he thought of himself waiting a suitor on the pleasure of the Effinghams—a discarded lover—a suppliant for grace and favour :—*he from them !*

"Give your master this letter," he said. "I forgot to mention in it that, during my absence, I should like my laboratory to be locked ; will you see to it, Richardson ? Anything I have left in my room keep for yourself."

"Sir !" exclaimed Richardson ; but Mr. Harley was gone. The coach had waited for him a second or two at the corner : he threw himself into a vacant seat. His fellow passengers, a farmer's family, did not address him ; they avoided the compartment of the train he chose when they reached the railway station : besides, they travelled second-class. "That must be a foreign gentleman," said one, the wife's sister, when the train began to move, and they felt secure from Mr. Harley's reappearance.

"He's not like any one that's right," said the wife.

"He looks so wicked," continued the sister.

"He might be the Evil One," remarked the wife.

"Did you see his look when baby woke ?"

"And when I began to read our parson's little book."

"His fingers were so white and thin, just like claws."

"But his eyes ! In the dark corner they were like coals of fire."

"Pooh, nonsense !" said the husband, who had been studying *Bradshaw* : "he was a queer chap, but you'll meet queerer between this and Hull."

"He took his ticket for Hull," said the wife ; "wasn't that very strange, husband ?"

"You'll see stranger between this and Hull."

"Dear me ! John, the world is very curious. It's a fine thing to travel."



CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Cosi per entro loro schiera bruna
S'ammusa l'una con l'altra formica,
Forse a spiar lor via o lor fortuna."—DANTE.

AN irregular but picturesque room, with furniture characteristic: tables crowded with the latest publications; comfortable chairs of every shape and degree of luxury in which to read them; working materials, game materials, music materials: a room well stocked against *ennui*, as a fortress is victualled against famine. But of that room, at the moment when I introduce you to it, reader, none of the four occupants ever suffered from bore. Lady Flintshire and her two daughters were practical, actively social people, who generally interested themselves in their companions, whoever they were; or, if that were impossible, they had always a repertoire of observations and conclusions respecting other acquaintances, to fall back upon. Lady Invergarry, Sir James Cameron's sister and their hostess, was too anxious, too irritable by temperament to feel at any time the weary mind-emptiness of *ennui*. Lady Flintshire had discussed the affairs of seventeen families since luncheon, aided by her daughters Lady Catherine and Lady Adelaide St. Pierre. Lady Invergarry had grounded half a yard of worsted embroidery. It was nearly five o'clock. "What time do you expect the Effinghams?" asked Lady Flintshire.

"The boat went for them across the loch half-an-hour ago. They ought to be here by tea-time."

"Have you seen much of Miss Effingham?"

"We met her everywhere this summer in London. I thought her decidedly pretty; but men don't admire her somehow."

"She has an odd look in her eyes," said Lady Catherine, a round brunette of thirty; "she talked strangely, too."

"Lady Effingham is a good sort of woman; but she is too civil: extremely well dressed. Have they a good fortune?"

"Yes, I fancy pretty good now."

"Sir Harry Effingham made money in India, I suppose."

"Yes, enough to buy back his property: he acted quite *admirably*. I believe his present marriage arose entirely from *his* discovery that Lady Effingham was attached to him: she *was* a widow in bad circumstances in India."

"Lady Mallham hinted something of the kind: how odd! Then Miss Effingham has fortune, or will have?"

"But is she not engaged to some cousin?" asked Lady Adelaide.

"There must have been something, or she would have been married before now: such a pretty girl! with a good fortune."

"I really do not know," said Lady Invergarry, irritably; for she dreaded, above all social dangers, that of being quoted for any statement, whether true or untrue.

"There was a Mr. Erle staying with them in London," persisted Lady Adelaide. "Flintshire was at Oxford with him, and said he was very clever; a first-class man, I think."

"Oh! that young man! So Miss Effingham is engaged to him: how odd."

"He is a protégé of Lord Waltham's."

"Exactly; but he is in some profession: he is a younger brother?"

"I fancy the eldest brother is much out of health," said Lady Invergarry, timidly. "Do you think this colour is good for grounding?"

"Extremely pretty; perhaps a shade paler might look better. I did hear something of that—deformed and weak-minded, somebody said. They are odd people altogether, are they not?"

The entrance of the Effingham party stayed her interrogatories. Lady Invergarry rose somewhat nervously to receive her guests. She was tall and graceful, and had been in her youth beautiful. But, so to speak, she had never enjoyed her beauty: she had shuffled through life in constant dread of committing some error, saying some misplaced word; she was one of those characters who are, if possible, over-disciplined; for she had subdued every natural impulse, until she had brought herself to a state of utter self-negation. She studied to avoid wrong rather than to follow right: duty was her aim, but her timid nature hindered her from action. She was, however, very positive in her theories of life: she rejected those of her intimates; for, like all weak people, she dreaded to be influenced by friendship or feeling; but she clung to the dicta of strangers as if they were oracles. Lady Flintshire guided her more than any other of her acquaintances, because Lady Flintshire, in her practical way, laughed at all the finer emotions which act on hearts; and Lady

Invergarry felt quite safe with her, and admired her "good sense" and "energy," and put great faith in her, because she was the opposite to herself. Lady Invergarry suffered wherever there was the least opening for uneasiness; and the arrival of Lady Effingham had made her extremely nervous, as she had not before been acquainted with her. Visions of a designing flirt, a sort of Becky Sharpe—Lady Invergarry had no toleration for flirts—rose before her; and Mildred, an incomprehensible young lady! It was so unfeminine to be odd! so very vulgar to affect singularity! She received the new-comers with a stateliness that yet did not conceal her alarms; but, ere five minutes had passed, all formality was gone. Lady Flintshire was discussing the circumstances of an eighteenth family with which she and Lady Effingham were mutually acquainted; Lady Adelaide and Mildred talking of the Caledonian canal; and Sir Harry and Sir James, who had appeared, debating the last Tory *canard*. Lady Invergarry rang the bell for tea. Ere it was over, Lady Flintshire had begun her nineteenth family; Lady Adelaide had quoted a line from *Locksley Hall*; and her elder sister was with interest listening to her mother's gossip, occasionally adding some further particulars. Her head was remarkably clear: she was never wrong in a fact.

After tea, Lady Invergarry took Lady Effingham and her daughter to their rooms. When she returned to the drawing-room, Lady Flintshire and her daughters were briskly discussing the new-comers: they were energetic about everything. "How much changed the girl is!" said Lady Flintshire.

"She has grown so pale!" exclaimed Lady Catherine.

"I think she has improved," observed Lady Adelaide.

"She has grown more like other people," pronounced Lady Flintshire. "Do you know she is decidedly handsome!"

"Here comes Charley and the other gentlemen," said Lady Adelaide, who stood near the window.

Now, Charley was Lady Flintshire's second son—a sailor, not long on shore.

"Have you had good sport, Mr. Cameron?" Lady Adelaide asked, as they stopped a second on the grass opposite the open sash.

"The grouse have grown wild, but we shot plenty of black game," he replied.

He was a tall, very handsome man, who spared no pains on dress.

"Why didn't you come and have luncheon with us, Ady?" asked her brother.

"We might have got up a trio *al fresco* such a day as this," said Mr. Lucy, the third sportsman,—older than his companions, but devoted to society, in which, by his success in a thousand little arts, he made himself popular and useful. He was always frivolous, but never dull; very amusing, never ill-natured. He was a convenient social machine: a gentleman, and thoroughly trustworthy, mothers delighted in him, daughters confided in him. He was not popular with men, who said he was like a French dancing-master; but that was not wonderful under the circumstances: besides, he was very harmless; so many called him a muff.

"Lady Invergarry waited at home for the Effinghams," said Lady Flintshire.

"They are come, then," returned Mr. Lucy, with interest,—"Lady Effingham and her 'dearest Milly.'"

"You know them, then, Lucy?" asked Mr. Cameron.

"*La jeune Meess* can sing; and I met her very often at Dari's. She is rather a genius: writes lyrics of the heart."

"Lord Darien always has phenomenons at his house," remarked Lady Flintshire.

"It did strike me that Miss Effingham had a *bête fauve* look. How odd!"

"She will be a study for you," said Mr. Cameron to Lady Catherine. He talked to her a good deal—unmarried young ladies bored him; but Lady Catherine was twenty-nine, and knew the world very well: she was bitter and satirical, and dwelt on its dark features. *Faute de mieux* he found her agreeable enough.

"Geniuses are to me incomprehensible: in those I have met I could only see greater affectation than usual. I must believe in them, I suppose, if I can't understand them."

"Clever people never can," he replied, with a slight emphasis. It was a doubtful compliment to Lady Catherine: she was clever,—nothing more.

"We shall be late!" exclaimed Lady Flintshire, turning away from the window.

"How odd, Catty, that Lord Darien should adopt those Effinghams!"

"He is *fanatico* about music. I suppose she sings well."

"Ah! yes, that must be it."

Lady Flintshire and her daughter were always elaborately,

rather than well, dressed. They had an excellent milliner and a perfect French maid, yet their costume was never successful. They followed the fashion of some acknowledged arbiter of taste implicitly, and never originated any system of their own. The materials of their dress were magnificent, unusually so for girls; and Lady Flintshire often inly wondered why the Setons and the Lucys, who seldom wore anything more expensive than white muslin, were so much better dressed than her daughters. After all it is an affair of inspiration, not of imitation: the Flintshire family were eminently Simitic in their idiosyncrasy. The existence of genius was a myth to them; their dress was always incongruous. The same solution is applicable to both facts. Lady Adelaide St. Pierre was decidedly good-looking; she had, perhaps, better features than Mildred, though her colouring was sallow; but Miss Effingham looked a being of a different order, as she passed into dinner leaning on Lord Charles St. Pierre's arm. Her dress was creamy white, statuesque in its folds; some sprays of white heath she had found during her journey northward, by the side of the Crinan canal, were fastened wreathwise in her hair; dark green bows of ribbon broke the monotony of her white costume. Lord Charles was silent for a minute or two from sheer admiration and surprise. He was a merry, rather weather-beaten, young sailor, with bright blue eyes, good features, and curling brown hair. He had a *grande passion* once a-week, and a chronic admiration for almost every young lady he met. But Miss Effingham! Generally he was fluent enough, and found no difficulty in making himself agreeable; but here was a Psyche sitting by his side! How could he talk nonsense to that pale ideal! At last he broke the ice, and was still more astonished to find that Mildred answered him in a common-place manner. No oracles fell from her finely-cut lips: there was nothing of the Pythoness in her replies; though her nostrils were so thin and curved, her grey eyes so bright and dilated. Mr. Cameron sat next her on the further side: beyond him, Lady Catherine St. Pierre. He never talked much, but less at dinner than at other times; less this night than usual, as he listened negligently to his neighbours' voluble rattle. Some remarks of Mildred had attracted his attention; they chimed with his own theories. Lord Charles did not very well know what to make of them; but he thought *Miss Effingham* all the more charming. The organ of veneration grows at sea. It was startling to watch Mildred as she

talked in her brilliant original fashion. Her countenance expressionless, her voice monotonous, her manner utterly quiet. There was a discord in the effect strangely fascinating. Lord Charles laughed and looked grave, by turns, while she talked; yet she might have slept, so complete was her repose of feature, but for the slight movement of her lips and the steady ray from her eyes. It was fortunate for the success of the dinner party, in a social point of view, that Lady Flintshire was present. Conversation in her neighbourhood never flagged; but the silences grew longer at the other end of the table.

Sir Harry Effingham looked often, and with anxiety, towards his daughter. Lady Invergarry was nervous and uneasy because he did so. Mr. Lucy was not so ready with his stock of quaint sayings as usual. Presently Mildred became silent and absent, in striking contrast to her previous fluency. Lady Invergarry did not long delay to make the signal for the ladies' retreat, when dinner was over. The evening was chilly; they stood round the fire in the drawing-room. Mildred gazed vacantly at it: the blazing peat cast a ghastly light on her face. "Are you tired, dearest?" asked her mother. Mildred muttered a negative, then turning hastily to Lady Adelaide St. Pierre, who stood next her, she began some trivial conversation. Lady Flintshire looked at her with an expression of puzzled inquiry, then at Lady Effingham. Nothing could be more impenetrable than her composure. Lady Flintshire was pleased: Lady Effingham was a woman of good taste, and evidently sensible. She sat down beside her on a sofa, and discussed Beaulieu and the Duchess thereof. Lord Charles St. Pierre and Mr. Lucy were the first gentlemen who appeared. They joined the group of young ladies at the "occupation end" of the room. The Ladies St. Pierre knew every game and puzzle that helps modern society; so did Mr. Lucy, and his little quips added zest to them. Mildred had again fallen into one of her fits of absence. At all times games had bored her; puzzles were an intolerable vexation: she was more than childishly stupid about combinations; the power of ratiocination seemed to have been omitted in the creation of her otherwise highly gifted mind. But, after a time, Mr. Lucy's jests were exhausted; he begged for music. Lady Invergarry added an entreaty, and a trio was got up between him and the Ladies St. Pierre. Mildred excused herself rather haughtily to Lady Invergarry.

who immediately retreated to her work table. "But you do sing?" asked Lord Charles, shyly, of Mildred.

"Yes, I can sing."

"Why not to-night? Are you tired?"

"Why not to-night?" she repeated, restlessly playing with a pencil which lay on the table.

"Then you will?"

"I shall be very happy," she replied, mechanically.

Meantime the neat little trio proceeded satisfactorily. Mr. Lucy had a well-taught but weak voice; and, spite of his hints and admonitions, Lady Catherine, who played an accompaniment on the piano, drowned it cruelly in the solo passages that fell to his share. She had a clear soprano voice, and sang correctly with a business air. Lady Adelaide was often out of tune, and then Mr. Lucy's countenance was pitiable to see, for he piqued himself on his good ear. Lady Flintshire—to whom music was an excellent social occupation, otherwise a bore,—when the final chord of the trio had died away, immediately entreated Miss Effingham to sing: she had not heard her previous refusal. "Will you try, Milly?" asked Lady Effingham, in softest tones from the sofa where, by her side, Mr. Cameron had taken Lady Flintshire's place.

"Don't if you are tired, Mildred," said Sir Harry, kindly. But she went to the piano. She did not turn over the leaves of music books, or ask bystanders what they would like, but almost instantly her full contralto voice throbbed on the air; a strange wild melody, falling and rising like the wind, with monotonous irregularity; no marked time or tune—incoherent: a music dithyramb. But her voice! It was not sweet; its fall was more exciting than lulling; its full tone was rather resonant than passionful. Between each part of her song came an accompaniment of jostling chords; modulations broken by discords—discords that thrilled upon the senses like a cry at midnight: there was no letting down at the end; the final sound was a minor chord struck very softly in the bass. Mr. Lucy looked puzzled. He had not time to adjust his thanks ere Mildred had risen. "Something German, I suppose?" said Lord Charles, inquiringly.

"I do not know it. It sounds like one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* sung."

"What odd music!" exclaimed Lady Flintshire. "Do you know I am not sure that I quite admire that style, Miss Effingham."

"I never heard you sing that, Milly," said Lady Effingham.

"It is your own composition," suggested Mr. Cameron, in a low voice, as he rose and offered his place on the sofa to Mildred. She seemed not to hear him, and passed on silently to her former seat.

Lord Charles fidgeted with the books that lay on the table near her, half doubtful if he should venture to address the singer of that strange uncanny song. Under cover of a nigger chorus from his sisters and Mr. Lucy, he at last spoke. Again he was startled by the miss-ish commonplace way she replied: he would have been relieved by it, but for its utter variance with her pallid statuesque beauty, and the echoes of her song, which haunted him strangely. Sir James Cameron, a polished old bachelor, with Grandisonian manners to women, came and sat by her. They fell a-talking about Indian history and Napoleon's campaign in Egypt for a while; and then Sir James, who every evening made the grand tour of his guests, passed on to pay his *devoirs* to Lady Effingham. "How well-informed your daughter is!" he observed. "Few young ladies, now-a-days, possess such practical knowledge; she seems so well-read in history." Lady Effingham was puzzled. History was her daughter's bugbear; the region of perpetual storms between Mildred and her governess. Mr. Cameron, who sat beside her, leaning back and a little in the shadow, looked curiously towards Miss Effingham. "Sentimental metaphysics are more in her line," he inly thought; "the history of her own mind, not other people's acts."

"I have taken great pains with Mildred's education," at length replied Lady Effingham.

"And the seed was sown in a good soil," said Sir James. Mildred had quite charmed him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"And when she rallied thus, more high
Her spirits ran—she knew not why—
Than was their wont in times than these
Less troubled, with a heart at ease.
So meet extremes—so joy's rebound
Is highest from the hollowest ground:
So vessels with the storm that strive
Pitch higher as they deeper dive."—TAYLOR.

THE next morning, a dense small rain kept every one within doors. Lady Invergarry was distressed by the responsibility of entertaining her guests. She spoke irritably to Mr. Lucy,

who murmured some words of hope and consolation : he was so good-tempered that people did not fear to indulge their vexation by being cross to him. But Lady Flintshire's appearance in the breakfast-room introduced a more comfortable atmosphere. She was always prepared with some measure for in-door relief from bore ; and, better quality still, she good-humouredly insisted on its being unanimously carried. " We will get up charades, this evening," she said, decisively. " Mr. Lucy, you know all about these things : you shall be our manager. Which shall it be, charades or tableaux ? "

" What do you say to a fusion ? The tableaux may tell their story : the spectators may guess it."

" That will do charmingly ; don't you think so, Emily ? " Lady Flintshire said, turning to Lady Invergarry.

" But in which room can it be managed ? "

" In the library, admirably," said Mr. Lucy ; " we shall do no harm : all we want is a veil of black gauze and a curtain."

" Black tarletane would just do," suggested Lady Catherine.

The morning was spent in debating words and scenes. The Flintshire family seemed to know the dictionary by heart. Lady Effingham's suggestions for costume were admirable ; and Mildred, whose drawing gear accompanied her everywhere, sketched groups in effective colouring and well-managed attitudes. Two o'clock and luncheon came, before the corps had even agreed as to the word they were to represent. Mr. Lucy was too civil and yielding to be an efficient manager ; he attended to every one's suggestions. " This will never do," said Lady Flintshire, as the pendule struck three. " You cannot indulge your tastes for high art at an hour's notice. It is too late to do anything well to-day. We will have some *petits jeux* to-night, but they must be impromptu."

" Erle would be invaluable," suggested Mr. Cameron, from a recess where he had been reading, seemingly unconscious of the theatrical debates. " Erle can do anything at a moment's notice."

" You know Cecil, then ? " asked Lady Effingham : " but he is abroad."

" No one can ever say, certainly, where he is ; but I wish he was here," replied Mr. Cameron, sauntering towards the group of anxious actors.

" How good," exclaimed Lady Flintshire, taking up one of Mildred's sketches.

"Charming," echoed Mr. Lucy, to whom she showed it. "Now, is it not a pity to have that scene unfulfilled? I gave up the word in despair until Miss Effingham idealised it."

"It is quite a little Greuze subject: let me see, a young peasant, like a Dresden china figure, standing by a well and crying over a broken pitcher. The attitude is perfect!"

"We may have the scene to-morrow, so I mustn't tell you what it is to imply."

"I really think we have had enough of charades for one day. Miss Effingham, can you play billiards?"

As usual, Lady Flintshire suggested the right amusement. The whole party adjourned to the billiard-room, and began a game of pool. Lady Catherine St. Pierre was the best player of the ladies: her eye was good, her hand steady; she played cautiously, and never missed an opportunity. Mildred sometimes made an almost impossible stroke, but generally missed her aim altogether: she was rather excited about the game, and childishly vexed or triumphant as she failed or succeeded. All this—with her classic head, her intellectual eyes, her pale set features! Mr. Cameron, who stood apart leaning on his cue while he waited his turn, watched her with interest. Lord Charles gave her advice about her strokes, and devoted himself to her with much ardour. He had begun to fall in love, for the awe with which she had inspired him the preceding evening was lessened by her ready assistance to the charade project. Mildred had been very charming to him all the morning, and asked for his advice about her sketches: he felt the happy consciousness that he was getting on; and her quiet grace at billiards, the beauty of her small hands, as he taught her to make a scientific bridge, was irresistible to his susceptible heart. Lady Effingham was a little puzzled by Mildred's manner, but she was on the whole satisfied: it was different from what it had previously been in society: it had been singular, and not at all popular. Mildred had been thought brusque and odd; and her singularities were too unaffected to be *piquante*, too original not to startle. Now Lady Effingham saw with content, that in whatever the change consisted, she had become attractive. Mr. Cameron, whose approval was as invaluable as rare, was evidently interested in her; Lord Charles was fascinated: Mildred, for some inexplicable cause, was having a *succès*. And that evening, how she added brilliance to the *petits jeux* on which Lady Flintshire insisted, by her versatility, her playful fancy; still pre-

serving, however, that statuelike calmness of feature, as new to her as was the social manner she had assumed. Even the occasional fits of absence, which had somewhat alarmed Lady Effingham the preceding evening, were fewer and shorter.

There was no music, spite of Mr. Lucy's desires; but Mildred sketched more scenes for the projected *tableaux*, and among them she introduced a pleasant likeness of Lady Adelaide, a well-figured and large-eyed girl, the enthusiast of her family: who, indeed, seemed to have monopolised the characteristic. She was already nourishing an admiration for Mildred, scarcely less strong than her brother's: she was given to sudden and extreme friendships, and a rapid adoption of the manners and tastes of her friend for the time,—a habit at which her mother and sister laughed much: and truly hero-imitation is worthy to cause laughter, though hero-worship be noble and commendable. Very warmly she pressed Miss Effingham's hand as they separated for the night; very reverently bowed her brother. Lady Flintshire's manner was cordial; Lady Invergarry's, thankful; her mother's, perfectly loving. Mildred was uppermost in their thoughts, admired and liked. Yet, as she walked along the corridor to her room, a stranger meeting her would have started as at an apparition, the more fearful for its loveliness:

“She seemed one dying in a mask of youth.”



CHAPTER XL.

“———— as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts and stood at bay,
Wounded, and weak, and panting; the cold day
Trembled for pity of my strife and pain,
When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun.”—SHELLEY.

ALAS! for Lady Flintshire's theatricals. A forest keeper passed hastily by the breakfast-room windows next morning. “Sandy McKay looks as if he had seen a muckle stag,” said Mr. Lucy, who stood near the window while Lady Invergarry made tea. A servant announced that three deer had been marked about two miles up the Strath. Mr. Cameron's pa-

sion was deer stalking. "Nothing could be better, with this wind," he said. "Lucy, two miles won't knock even you up; you're very likely to get a shot in the Strath. Charley, you are an honorary Nelson; will you shoot anything less than a bear?"

"Charley and I shan't have much shooting," replied Mr. Lucy: "we'll lie in a burn and admire the pebbles. However, I wouldn't have the responsibility of being in the best place for anything; Sandy McKay's face frightens me if I miss."

"Couldn't we all go?" asked Lady Flintshire.

"In about two hours we shall probably be returning," said Mr. Cameron; "we could all have luncheon together by the waterfall." So it was agreed. The three gentlemen started in picturesque file, followed by Sandy and two gillies.

"Our poor charades!" exclaimed Lady Flintshire, opening a roll of worsted work. "But do tell me, Lady Effingham, is the Mr. Erle who was at Naples last winter your nephew? Every one thought him so clever."

"Cecil is clever," said Lady Effingham. "I have not seen him for two years, however, except for a fortnight before he went abroad."

"So clever, and so extremely good-looking!" continued Lady Flintshire; "and not at all unconscious of it, do you know," she added, with a tone of *bonhomie* and *candour* assumed when she discussed faults in others.

"Ah! that was always a failing of Cecil's," said Lady Effingham, with a laugh.

"Everything he did had a *succès*; but he had excellent taste and was never eccentric."

"Eccentricity is such a mistake," observed Lady Catherine: "that sort of *renommée* never lasts; but Mr. Erle exalted the common-place."

"There never was any one less common-place, Catty," said Lady Flintshire, who did not always quite understand her daughter's antitheses. "But what is he to be?"

"He intends to be something, some day: he is very ambitious. Lord Waltham has offered him his private secretaryship meantime."

"He will succeed, I should think," said Lady Flintshire, reflectively.

"Or fail brilliantly," added Lady Catherine.

"Do you agree in these criticisms?" asked Lady Adelaide of Mildred,

"I! oh yes."

"That Mr. Erle will fail brilliantly."

"Yes, I daresay."

"Milly, you are absent," remarked Lady Effingham; "you do not really think so." Miss Effingham looked up wearily.

"Dearest, you are so *distract*. We were talking of Cecil. Lady Flintshire thinks he will succeed."

"Very probably."

Lady Effingham was annoyed: she turned to other subjects. The time soon came to start for the waterfall. Lady Flintshire, punctual even in so irregular an expedition as the present, was the first equipped for the heather paths. On no occasion is dress so characteristic as in a mountain walking costume. The Flintshire party, in their sensible but unpicturesque short petticoats and cottage bonnets, were attired wisely but not well. Lady Effingham wore a stone grey cashmere suit, and a brown straw hat, with brim deep in proportion as the eaves of a Swiss cottage: rose colour accessories brightened the subdued tints of her dress. Very feminine and graceful she looked, carrying to the wild hillside the refinement without the finery of a drawing-room costume.

And Mildred?

"Very odd, and too much an imitation of Lady St. Aubyn," murmured Lady Flintshire.

"Rather *voyant* and fast," thought Lady Catherine.

"Not in good taste," was Lady Invergarry's nervous and unassumed criticism.

"So becoming!" exclaimed Lady Adelaide St. Pierre.

Reader, remember the refined beauty of Mildred; her head almost too small for symmetry, her slight form and always graceful movements, and you will acknowledge that the latter criticism was, at least, as true as those unexpressed.

A black velvet Glengarry bonnet, with eagle's feather, brought to her by Herbert from Ireland; a short cloak, the hood of which was lined with scarlet; her gown looped up, for convenience in crossing the long heather, and underneath, a petticoat of alternate narrow stripes of scarlet and black: tiny leather boots, miniatures of the nailed and toe-capped species, that grouse-shooters find necessary on the slippery hill-side; thin dogskin gloves, fitting more perfectly than any kid, and not ready to tear in the uses that hands may be put to in a mountain walk.

Was it too voyant? It was certainly becoming. Eyes

could not be too wildly brilliant beneath an eagle's plume, nor features too statuesque to bear the severe unshaded lines of a Glengarry bonnet.

The scarlet hood made Mildred's pallor beautiful : her hands and feet looked all the smaller for the ordeal they bore so well. There was a natural *fierté* about her at all times—a timid boldness, so to speak, which gave to her costume the fascination of suitableness. Perfect as Lady Effingham's dress was, Mildred would have looked awkward in it. A servant followed, carrying a sumpter-basket well filled : and fortunately, for when the party reached the waterfall, after an hour's walking, they found Mr. Lucy and Lord Charles in hungry waiting. "I knew how it would be," exclaimed the former; "the muckle stag didn't wait to be shot, and Cameron has gone off to the forest. I don't believe in those deer: their presence was a myth of Sandy's."

"Lucy wanted to go home, so I stayed too," said Lord Charles, rather apologetically.

"Truth has left this world, Lady Invergarry. Charley was the first to give up; of course, I seconded his motion, remembering our plays, and appointment here, and luncheon."

It was a charming spot. A little glen, and below a brawling stream foaming among rocks; then a terrace of soft sward, kept to velvet texture by the mountain sheep, with here and there a purple isle of heather or a grey lichened stone. Above rose a cliff, clothed with hazel and dwarf gnarled birch, through which gleamed patches of tawny brown, where had been a recent earthslip, leaving a scar yet unhealed; or some boulder rock had fallen down into the stream below—the quarrelsome innovation-hating stream. It was a charming spot, warm and sunny; and near at hand leaped a clear spring of water, its source veiled by the trailing fog-moss. Luncheon was lifted out of the basket, and every one was very happy. Nobody was gayer than Mildred—gay even to recklessness: a war of minute jests waged *à l'outrance* between her and Mr. Lucy, with which Lord Charles St. Pierre, his lips slightly parted, felt himself pelted as by *confetti* during carnival. Poets were parodied—paraphrased; quoted *à tort et à travers*. The St. Pierres joined; Lady Invergarry smiled constrainedly at each flash in the conversational pyrotechny; Mr. Lucy proposed a glee: "Mynheer Vandunck" was brilliantly rendered—Lady Flintshire adding an occasional note, very punctually, but not always in tune. Then followed the "Carità" chorus; and, in

conclusion, with much enthusiasm, "God save the Queen." Miss Effingham sang the solo : her full large notes rose magnificently, even in the unbounded air. All stood up, as was meet, in reverence to the English anthem,—all more or less pleasantly excited by the merry hour they had passed. It was strange to watch Miss Effingham, as Lord Charles St. Pierre did—her set pale features, her dreaming inward-gazing eyes. An indefinite disquietude gathered on him, and the music became to him as mocking and strange, as to one sinking to sleep who mixes sadder thoughts with the sounds he hears. A low, creeping fog came fast up the glen, with a sigh of wind, and wrapped the merry-makers in its cold shroud ere they were aware. "How cold!" shivered Lady Invergarry.

"We must make haste home," exclaimed Lady Flintshire. Her daughters followed her quickly. By their side Mr. Lucy, for the path was rough; then Lady Effingham and Lady Invergarry; Lord Charles St. Pierre and Mildred, lastly. She did not walk so hurriedly as the others, nor stumble over the stones, nor slip on the heather. Lord Charles felt his admiration accumulating as he pointed out to her the best path, the safest footing, and helped to raise the hood of her cloak so as to shield her from the eddying fog. He talked of his lonely sailor life, his ambitions for greater usefulness than lay within the limits of a first lieutenant's sphere. He told her many a thought which had come to him in his watches at sea,—thoughts that had lain *perdu* until the last few days; since when they had thronged into his memory and reproached him for his want of energy and his uselessness. He was very much in earnest, and his true simple heart had been stirred with new feelings and hopes since he had been in Mildred's society. She had not inspired, but evoked them. He did not know if she felt as he did, but her mere presence had strangely acted upon him, and in the fulness of his heart he longed for her sympathy. But Mildred rather laughed at his romantic ideas, and carelessly ridiculed his views of life. She did not seem to observe his earnest manner, and treated what he said as a jest; for a moment, perhaps, adopting his tone, but ironically; or if she spoke gravely, it was but to give effect to a palpable sophism. Lord Charles was puzzled, a little disappointed, but all the more in love. If she had given him her full sympathy, he might have been in the seventh heaven, for an hour or so; as it was, he seemed ever on its threshold; and "*felicity consists not in possessing but in desiring.*" They

reached Strathmore at length. A drizzling rain had come down, and Miss Effingham's cloak was covered with damps like autumn gossamer. The other ladies went to their rooms to change their dresses. "Will not you do so?" asked Lord Charles.

"I suppose so."

"I say, Charley," said Mr. Lucy, who joined him in the hall, as he stood reflectively by the fire when Mildred had passed on, "come and have a game of billiards: all have gone to their rooms, and we can't settle anything now about our charades." Lord Charles was more in a mood for his own reflections than Mr. Lucy's small talk; but he had not a habit of selfishness, and generally did what he was asked.

Mildred turned to the drawing-room. No one was there. She sat down wearily on a low ottoman in one of the deep window recesses; and, leaning back on the piled cushions, she fell into a kind of dream without thoughts—a state of inertness, of mental lassitude and unconsciousness. Her hair, wetted by the mist, had partly fallen from its fastenings; and her face, unlighted by her eyes, gleamed pallidly through the tresses; the hood had fallen from her head; her Glengarry bonnet lay on the ground by her side, the eagle's feather was ruffled and bent; her hands were listlessly crossed, and a glove had fallen on the floor from her nerveless grasp. For some time she sat thus in mental darkness. Life was a blank; if, indeed, her existence could be called life—objectless and desireless as it was. The mist had grown into fierce rain, which splashed against the window monotonously, and shut out, as a grey curtain might, the landscape. But suddenly a feeling of existence returned: her senses seemed to awake from their swoon; and her pulses beat as fast as they had before been dull; her hearing grew painfully acute, as she unwittingly listened for a sound. With a startled anxiety she opened her eyes. Cecil Erle stood opposite to her in the recess: he leant against the wall, and by his calmness it was evident that he had been some while watching her. Her presence of mind seemed to have forsaken her: his sudden appearance, her abrupt recall from the kind of trance into which she had fallen, overcame her strength; her lips grew livid, a sudden pain contracted her features, she murmured some inaudible words of hurried greeting, and half rose; but only to sink again faintly. "Miss Effingham—Mildred! you are ill. Good God! how ill!" exclaimed Cecil, hastily sup-

porting her, or she would have fallen from her seat. "Shall I fetch you a glass of water, or send for your maid?"

"I am better," said Mildred, with an effort recovering herself. "I have tired myself walking. There is eau-de-cologne on the table, will you give me some?" She wished him to turn away his gaze, if it were but for a second: his nearness seemed to weight the air, to oppress her.

"It is not good to watch people when they sleep," he said, as she bathed her forehead with the eau-de-cologne: "but you were not formerly so sensitive; or, perhaps, I was not so alarming. Now that you are better, will you not welcome me after my *wander jahre*?" In vain Miss Effingham tried to rally her powers: she said one or two common-places, but falteringly. The fluency with which she had entertained Lord Charles St. Pierre entirely deserted her. She grew pale and red by turns. "Let me use the privilege of our old friendship, and recommend you to get rid of those wet clothes and rest for a while: you are very tired. These Highlands tempt one to indefinite walks." She followed his kindly suggestion, rather glad to escape from his presence. She did not accept his offered arm to cross the hall; but with some hurried words of thanks she left the room, and quickly reaching her own, she flung herself on the sofa, and pressed her hand upon her eyes like one who might wish to obliterate an object from the memory.



CHAPTER XLI.

"Deux sortes de roués existent sur la terre:
L'un beau comme Satan, froid comme la vipère,
Hautain, audacieux, plein d'imitation,
Ne laissant palpiter sur son cœur solitaire
Que l'écorce d'un homme, et de la passion
Faisant un manteau d'or à son ambition."—A. DE MUSSET.

"VERY charming of you, Mr. Cameron, to find Mr. Erle," exclaimed Lady Flintshire, when she heard of his arrival. "How was it?" All the party had assembled before dinner except the object of her inquiries.

"I walked up the Strath seven or eight miles, and by chance came across him close to where we march with Multon. Remembering your plays, Lady Flintshire, I insisted on his *returning here*; so we sent back the keeper who was with

him to Corriehoich for his mails. I suppose their late arrival has delayed him. He is a Percy Shafton."

"But how did he come to Corrie——?" asked Lady Effingham, wisely omitting the last syllable. "We hardly expected him so soon even in England."

"He is always to be found where he is wanted," said Mr. Cameron, oracularly.

Dinner was announced, and Mr. Erle appeared at the same moment. There was no time for more than a hasty recognition of those whom he knew. "Do you not hate introductions?" he asked of Mildred, next whom he sat.

"Why?"

"One should not require the endorsement of another to be received as worthy of credit. I always avoid the practice, yet I have many acquaintances."

"Was it for that reason you were but just in time for dinner?"

"Precisely."

"Then you weigh trifles very carefully."

"More carefully than important affairs: *they* have a fixed scale of consequences. Besides, they are only conglomerate trifles."

"It is too much trouble," said Mildred.

"I can conceive only one trouble—failure; and I know nothing of that."

"You are always successful?"

"Always; because I take care to fill up the gaps where mischance might enter."

Miss Effingham had recovered her calm—if her somewhat reckless nonchalance can be called calm. "Lady Flintshire proposes that we should represent tableaux, and that you should be our manager. Will success attend you in that?"

"I attempt no Quixotisms. Who are to perform?"

"You must select your corps from the present company."

"Without reserve?"

"But leave a spectator or two."

"We will have some tableaux to-morrow. But tell me, Mildred, how we chance to meet here."

"We came three days ago from Effingham."

"And I, yesterday, to Corriehoich. I arrived in London from Paris on Tuesday, and Multon persuaded me to come on to his moor with him. How lucky that I did not follow

inclination, and go down to Effingham: duty meets its own reward."

"You don't care for shooting, then?"

"I am not insane about it. No; my Polar expedition was a sacrifice; but I have found you and Lady Effingham."

"And the St. Pierres."

"How odd!" He imitated Lady Flintshire's favourite exclamation perfectly.

Meantime dinner was over; all gloves were drawn on, all pocket handkerchiefs collected, and Lady Invergarry rose. Lord Charles was not slow to appear in the drawing-room. He came as near to Mildred as an intervening table allowed. She was listening to Lady Catherine, a dabbler in geology, now trying to explain some old red sandstone mystery:

"——— chattering stony names
Of shale and hornblende,"

quoted Mr. Lucy.

"More sketches, Miss Effingham! worthy of Retzsch."

"How can you invent such figures?" exclaimed Lady Adelaide.

"They seem to be dancing to that song you sung the first night you were here," said Mr. Lucy.

"What a wonderful thing it was," observed Lord Charles, shyly.

"By the by, I have found the little air of Gordigiani's I told you of," said Mr. Lucy to Lady Catherine. "Will you come and try it?"

"Adie, you will accompany us."

"Are these designs for our tableaux?" asked Mr. Erle, taking Lady Catherine's vacated seat on the sofa by Mildred's side.

"Hardly: these are dreams."

"Then you are 'haunted by ill angels only?' I never dream."

"It is strange!" said Mildred absently.

"Bertie has monopolised the power. But Lady Effingham tells me he has become quite a practical man of business."

"So every one said," she replied in the same tone of voice.

"I am glad he has shaken off Harley's influence: it was destructive."

"His friends seemed to think so," said Mildred, with perfect calm.

"I have thought of two scenes for our tableau to-morrow:

I will propose them to you, and, if you approve, they shall be carried unanimously."

"I sketched some costumes yesterday : I suppose colour and grouping are of consequence ?"

"Admirable accessories. Let me see : this is Lady Adelaide St. Pierre. Has she seen the sketch ?"

"Yes, and much approves."

"She will insist on rendering the attitude, it is so becoming. The St. Pierres will do very well for pathetic scenes ; and an after piece is necessary for the digestion."

"I don't like absurdities : everything ugly is disagreeable."

"Very true : broad jokes are always blunt. Besides, the highest absurd is when we touch the sublime."

"And what are to be your words ?"

"The first I propose is *chiaro-scuro* : 'very tragical mirth.'"

"Will that suit the St. Pierres ? They would do mirthful tragedy better : there is a difference."

"I perceive it dimly. I have not settled a scene for them : it is so much easier to make folk cry than laugh. But your sketch of Lady Adelaide shall inspire me : I'll 'arise from dreams of it.'"

"I thought you never dreamt ?"

"Never, except to order ; my thoughts are well-disciplined, and I have many uses for them." Mildred looked at him wistfully. "You look so puzzled. Do you not think thoughts can be disciplined ?"

"Certainly : some banished, if they are troublesome."

"Have you that power, then ?" he asked, gravely.

"Pre-eminently," she replied, calmly and slowly.

"It is not generally a woman's gift ; it requires strength : thought-control is the most wearing of all the bits and bridles men have to endure."

"I have strength for anything," said Mildred with a smile.

"Racehorses run themselves to death sometimes," he muttered.

CHAPTER XLII.

Ophelia.—Belike, this show imports the argument of the play.

Hamlet.—Madam, how like you this play ?

Queen.—The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

Hamlet.—O, but she'll keep her word.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE library at Strathmore was long in proportion to its breadth, and without ill effect a part could be curtained off

for a temporary stage. Sir James Cameron gave *carte blanche* to Mr. Erle. The housekeeper was obliging, indeed enthusiastic; for she had literary and artistic leanings, and a day's exertion was sufficient for the simple preparations Cecil required. The families of two or three principal tenants on the Strathmore estate helped to swell the audience. At nine o'clock the folding doors of the library, which opened on the drawing-room, were drawn aside. A single lamp from the ceiling served to show the benches for the spectators, nothing more. A crimson curtain hung across the room in heavy folds. Some moments passed in this sombre light,—moments of growing expectation, heightened at last to suspense, while a sense of mystery prepared the heart for emotion, and sharpened world-blunted powers of perception. All are silent and attent. Hush! There is a sound as of some distant chorus. It comes nearer and nearer. A strange measure, antique and quaint, stately and severe in modulations, yet festive; in triple time, but smooth and measured. The mind is filled with dreams of the past, recalled by the music. We are transported to the age of Elizabeth: visions of the courtly gallants of Sir Philip Sidney's time arise. The curtain, noiselessly but quickly, is drawn aside, and its full hangings form a frame to the picture unveiled. At first, the glare of light which falls upon the centre group is dazzling. It is concentrated on a slight girlish figure, gentle looking, and graceful; but depths of passion, yet unstirred by circumstance, are folded up within her, as lightning in the summer clouds. Her dress is white, and reflects the light almost as if it emanated from her, aureole-wise. She stands as if spell-bound, her head slightly turned, as she looks towards a masked figure. He seems reluctantly to leave her side. His dress is of the sixteenth century, crimson and white, with velvet cloak and rapier. He passionately meets her gaze. She appears to feel no embarrassment, to be unconscious of the presence of others. She stands as one who has received a heavenly revelation. An elderly woman, duenna-like, of a shrewd good-humoured countenance, is near, and seems to scan the masquer with curiosity. A companion, in a quainter costume of the same date, touches his arm and motions him away. In the background, a tall menacing figure, hand on sword, stands dimly looming in the shade, but not forming part of the group. *As the curtain falls,—a silence follows. Lady Flintshire was first to speak: "Very well done," she pronounced.*

"Now, I suppose we are to guess the meaning. Evidently it is intended for a fragment of the masquerade scene in *Romeo and Juliet*."

"Ah! exactly," said Lady Catherine. "How good of Lady Effingham to act the part of nurse: how well she travestied herself."

"Mr. Erle was *Romeo*, I conclude. I suppose the other figure was *Mercutio*."

"That was Mr. Lucy; and did you observe Mr. Cameron as *Tybalt* in the background?"

"Really, it was very pretty," said Lady Flintshire, with the same interest she would have bestowed on a piece of Berlin work, as she moved to the drawing-room to await the next scene.

"Where is Charley? We must all try and guess the word." She looked round. "How odd!" she exclaimed. "You look quite dazzled and owlish, Charley."

"Do you know you all look startled!"

It was so. The impersonation had been so true to nature, that not easily did the guests recover their accustomed tone. There had been something weird in Juliet's eyes which still haunted their memories; and her gaze, so fraught with coming passion, would not leave them. Lord Charles St. Pierre quitted the room: criticism irritated him past endurance, and at that moment he felt he could not control the expression of his annoyance if he stayed. They were not long kept waiting for the second spectacle. The same pause ensues when they have resumed their seats. Suddenly are heard sounds as of angry dispute—the clash of swords—a smothered sigh, half of physical pain, half of mental despair. The curtain opens rapidly. A dim murky half-light makes the darkness of the background visible. An antique silver lamp, hanging from the roof, shines like a pale white star through the gloom. Below, a flickering gleam, now casting a bluish ghastliness on the scene, now blazing ruddily, streams from a torch. A cowed friar holds it. Pity, awe, and horror mark his countenance. His hand is laid, as if in persuasion, on the arm of a white-clad ghastly woman. She seems unheeding of his entreaty. She looks on a prostrate figure before her, half shrouded in the shadow. A gaze of power and of irresistible purpose gleams from her eyes, and casts the pale light of triumph on her sternly-composed features. *No irresolution distorts them. No thought smoothes the lines*

of intense will, which has curved her mouth, and given to her large gleaming eyes and straightened brows the beauty of a destroying angel. She stands and calmly scans the lifeless form before her. Calm ! for to her there is no future, no despair. Anxiety and fear distort the friar's face. Hers expresses no feeling : she is past emotion—statue-like in her fixed will. The curtain is drawn ; the guests rise hastily, and crowd to the well-lighted drawing-room, glad to escape. " Really ! quite terrible," said Lady Flintshire, shaking off the impression momentarily made even on her. " Catty, I do trust your tableau will be less tragic and classical." She turned and saw that both her daughters had gone to prepare for their parts. They had some slight alterations to make in their costumes, which were, however, already nearly complete. Meantime Lady Effingham and Mr. Cameron had reappeared.

" It is a relief to escape from that chamber of horrors," said Lady Effingham, smiling : " cups of poison and dead men for furniture."

" Do you know I sympathise with you," said Lady Flintshire. " But where is your daughter ?"

" Mildred had to make some changes in her winding-sheet, but she will not be long."

" Wonderful she was ! A revival of Mrs. Siddons," said Sir James Cameron, advancing. " Your son has not recovered himself yet, Lady Flintshire. Miss Effingham electrified us. But here she comes," and he moved with *empressement* to meet her. She had twisted some ivy in her hair. Her light-bearing eyes were more brilliant than usual. Her step was firm, her bearing gracefully erect. She seemed in gay—singularly gay—spirits ; laughing with a clear sweet tone peculiar to her, at the secrets of the green-room which she disclosed ; the quaint shifts which had been resorted to : how the dead Romeo had sneezed from the torch smoke, and Mr. Lucy had been half stifled by Friar Lawrence's cowl. But somehow her merriment was not contagious. Sir James Cameron's encomiums fell to the ground : how could he compare this festive Bacchante to Mrs. Siddons ! Lady Effingham was a little disconcerted by Mildred's recklessly gay manner. The stranger guests, demurely dignified, did not know what to think of it. Lady Invergarry grew nervous, for Lady Flintshire evidently thought Miss Effingham odd—a serious social *nisdemeanor*. It was satisfactory at length to

another summons to the library. The Ladies St. Pierre were well costumed, well grouped, and looked their parts in a very orthodox and satisfactory manner. Lady Adelaide attempted expression; Lady Catherine availed herself of her acquaintance with objects of art, and attitudinized after Canova and Gibson. Graceful and almost unfelt burlesque had been Mr. Erle's aim: the after tableaux gave far more satisfaction to the spectators than the previous more terrible scenes. Cecil had anticipated their greater popularity, but he wished to test Mildred's powers; if possible to find a clue to the discord between her look and manner, which fascinated him even while it was in itself painful. He was startled, confounded, by her talents—by her intense rendering of the vehement southern's passions, in their first dawn as in their awful setting. He was further than ever from comprehending her, but he was more fascinated than ever: he desired to know her better, to look down the fire-depths which that evening had been revealed to him in her nature. He went through the after scenes with impatience, but carefully; for he affected the unerringness of a Crichton. He ceased not to watch Mildred: he listened for her voice in the murmur of conversation, and heard her exchange of jests with Mr. Lucy. In all, he fancied he detected unreality and fever strength: he was the more attracted. Mildred, as he had before known her, had never inspired him with the same interest as now. The curtain had fallen for the last time, and the actors had mixed among the spectators, infusing social elation, and giving an air of a *bal costumé* to the circle—a rumour of dancing spread among the *désœuvré* groups: how originated no one knew, but it met with approbation.

The oak hall, pleasantly lighted by a blazing wood fire, was ready, and in a very few minutes Mr. Lucy and Lady Catherine St. Pierre, Lord Charles and Mildred, with one or two other couples, were waltzing. Miss Effingham did not dance well; as a consequence, she did not like it, especially the very rapid and prolonged gyrations in which her partner delighted: tired, giddy, confused, she leant against a pillar. Lord Charles discussed dance-music; she answered absently. He tried to interest her, and got out of his depth among German composers. "I am sure you like that kind of music. But are you tired? shall we have another turn?" Fortunately for Mildred, the waltz ended as he spoke. Reluctantly he gave up his place by her side to Mr. Erle.

"I will answer St. Pierre's question for you," Cecil said, for he had overheard Lord Charles's assertion. "You do not like German as well as Italian music: could Juliet have a doubt?"

"I believe I like German best," said Miss Effingham.

"Our beliefs often contradict our faiths," said Cecil; "and our feelings are not seldom at variance with our minds. Now I know that you are southern in your tastes."

"Southern, to me, suggest rather lazy people; not intellectual—a prey to bad temper."

"Not intellectual!" exclaimed Cecil. "They may not so perseveringly wander about in a vague twilight of ideas as your northerns, but their thoughts are bright and clear as the landscapes under their own skies. We will have some of their music to-morrow, and you will join my faith. Another waltz has begun; shall we dance?"

"I do not like dancing."

"I will convert you; but not to-night: the music is not smooth, nor the atmosphere soft enough, in this hall."

"Mr. Erle, we have guessed the meaning of your first tableau, have we not?" asked Lady Flintshire with glee, advancing to where he and Miss Effingham stood—"‘Chiaroscuro.’ But you did not represent the whole: it was not fair."

"For that, lifetime remains," he replied; "and surely, Lady Flintshire, sometimes rules may be broken to produce the better effect."

"The effect was very fearful," said she: "at any rate, I confess I thought ‘Crocodile’ more *selon les règles*."

"Lady Adelaide made a charming figure at the well, certainly. Miss Effingham's sketch inspired the scene."

"It was a good idea, afterwards showing up that ‘odyle force’ absurdity," continued Lady Flintshire. "Catty was an admirable ‘sensitive.’"

"Admirable," repeated Cecil, gravely.

"The scene from *Lady Tartuffe* was charming. So good of Lady Effingham to undertake her part: it is not an agreeable one; but why are you not dancing, Miss Effingham?"

"I am rather tired. I think this is the last waltz."

"I suppose so, and the tune is coming to the final crash."

The final crash took place soon after. The guests dispersed—the neighbours to their homes, the rest to their rooms. Mildred sat, dreamily watching the fire, until sheer fatigue forced her to go to bed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"Il chanta cet air qu'une fièvre brulante
Arrache, comme un triste et profond souvenir,
D'un cœur plein de jeunesse et qui se sent mourir."

A. DE MUSSET.

"He spoke to her pure words of lofty sense,
But tinged with poison for a tranced ear:
He took her hand in his, and it lay still."—McDONALD.

"We have an hour to ourselves before dressing-time," said Cecil Erle to Mildred, the following afternoon, "while Cameron is playing that match at billiards with St. Pierre. This twilight will do for music; we can give ourselves up to it, and forget everything else."

"Forget! I think music quickens memory."

"We shall see. I will sing for you a song of Marras's, 'Cara, se cado esanime.' Will you sit on that low ottoman?" He sang—a silence followed: he turned and looked at Miss Effingham. She leant back against the pile of cushions, very pale; her eyes were half closed, or a heavy tear which trembled on the long lashes would have fallen. He sang again, song after song, wave after wave of passion-inspiring music. He rose quickly at the end, and walked to the window, where he stood for a few minutes; then, with some slight remark, he broke the spell with which he had bound Mildred. A servant brought candles: she rose languidly.

"You will sing for me to-morrow," said Cecil; "not to-night. Do not sing to-night. I never do for the Flintshires and the Camerons with which society is stocked."

"Why not? It would help to pass the evening."

"Mildred, why do you not say what you think? Surely you are not earnest in speaking so: surely you have felt the power of music; or is it yet an undiscovered influence?" He spoke eagerly. Mildred stood for a second irresolute: a slight colour flushed through her cheek, as quickly gone as come. She answered, jestingly, "You speak the jargon of poets, Cecil. Music is a pleasure, hardly an influence." He looked after her with a puzzled air, as she turned to go.

"You speak the jargon of 'well-regulated' people," he retorted. "But, if I am not mistaken, pleasure will always influence you: in the sunshine roses open."

"And wither," said Mildred, in a low tone. Cecil caught

the words. There were unaccountable inconsistencies in Mildred's manner : that pale spell-bound face while he sang, and yet the subsequent careless words. He sought every opportunity for a *tête-à-tête* conversation with her : she was inscrutable in general society. He was not amused by her brilliancy as others were : it seemed too incongruous. In her presence he lost much of his social power : he felt, he knew not why, a sense of constraint while she was singing songs "in a strange land." But, alone with her, it was very different : he influenced her strongly, and felt he did. It was long ere he found even a clue to her mood ; she seemed so little in earnest about anything : the most personal interests she played with as jests, and was only serious in nonsense. But the occasional flash of intellect, and of a deeper meaning which at times burst forth dazzlingly, gave an exciting interest to all she said : conversing with her was like walking through an enchanted garden, full of fair forms, which vanished if you sought to grasp them, while mocking voices urged you to try again.

"As I said, yesterday, yours is not a *tedesque* mind, Mildred," Cecil observed one morning, finding her turning over the pages of a new translation of Schiller's ballads. "Have you believed that you liked the misty dreams of the Germans?"

She said something in defence of her heretofore leanings to their writings. He left the room without reply, but quickly reappeared with a small thick volume in his hand, handsomely bound, but bearing a look of use and constant reference, as a book should. It was full of closely-written manuscript. "This volume might represent my mind," he said. "There is scarce a line in it that is not the expression of a thought—a want of my own : it is the avatar of my intangible ideas. If I do not miscalculate, many of yours—yet latent, perhaps—are enshrined there too. Shall we try?" She did not seem very curious, and she leant back with evident want of interest, as he began to unpack his wares. "I do not pique myself on possessing unpublished poetry, which is generally not worth publishing," he continued. "Whatever I felt to be true, I gathered as I met it : so this is not only the reflection of myself, but my history. I want to read you an Italian fragment : I want you to learn your own language."

"Mine!"

"The language of southern feeling, the utterance of southern

faiths. How can Germans speak of what they do not understand? Your needs are southern, Mildred." She smiled. "It is as I say," he persevered. "You have the passionate brain, which is so beautiful, sometimes so sorrowful, a possession. You do not think ideas, you feel them; and they influence you as music does, or flowing verse, or beauty in all visible forms."

For a second, Mildred's countenance was troubled. She said hurriedly, "These things may be true; I hardly know."

"You have been a tropic plant in a northern soil. Some stunted leaves you have tremblingly expanded, but the thousand sweet-breathed flowers could not bloom under the system of Anglo-German culture."

Such interpretations were very new to Miss Effingham: she had been instructed in facts, and all her acquirements took the form of facts external to her. Her mind was like a "Christmas-tree," on which gifts and beautiful things were hung: they were not its own productions, nor had they even been incorporated by grafting; which should be the aim of instruction. Beautiful things hung gracefully on the beautiful tree, and society admired the effect; but they were, to the drooping branches, a weight, and a bad exchange for its own blossoms. And Stephen Harley had come and shaken the tremulous plant, till its leaves were reversed and shattered, and even its adventitious beauties were confusedly scattered hither and thither. He had spoken to her of exalted truths, of high aspirations; she had admired—looked up to him—as an acacia might to a cedar; yet, in his Titan height, she had found no likeness to herself. Her love for him had been totally unconnected with any sense of her own necessities: it had been all the more intense, the more enduring; but it had left many an interstice in her nature yet unoccupied. Stephen had revealed his nobleness to her: she had thrown herself at his feet, ignorant of the passions which constrained her. Cecil Erle taught her to know herself, while he remained impenetrable; but his lessons had the greater effect, since they were instilled at that turning point of her life when she was left aimless and hopeless. Darkness had shadowed her; she had lost her way in life, and missed all landmarks: she could only gropingly try to follow the voices of those near her. Hence her forced gaiety, her perpetual inconsistencies, the incongruity of her conduct, with her pale sad face. She had worshipped a star in Stephen, and its light illumined her heaven; it fell, and she knew not whither to steer. Cecil

came and taught her to know her own capacities : he drew forth her latent sympathies, and showed her their close connection with external impressions. Cecil's singing gave her an oppressive pleasure, as might the throbs of perfume breezes. Wonderingly, passively, she received it. It was like the breath of southern air to an exiled tropic flower : at first, almost dangerous in its contrast with the chill damp that use had made habitual. He read to her extract after extract from his MS. book : not love poems—the time had not come for them ; but verses full of noble beauty, clear, keen-edged beauty, which smote her through and through. Many of them were inspirations of the

“ fervide arditi Itale menti
Dogni alta cosa insegnatori altrui.”

There were English fragments also ; but Englishmen do not infuse the same love into their more exalted strains, nor the same exaltation into their love, as the Italians : they place a gulf between thought and passion. Mildred could not but listen. Short discussions sometimes arose. Each observation of Cecil's was a gleam of light upon her self-ignorant soul. He sometimes spoke of himself. She listened to his interpretations of his impulses, and learnt to know her own. Two hours passed thus as minutes, and then Lady Catherine St. Pierre reappeared from her room, where she had been writing letters. One by one, her sister, mother, the whole party, re-collected for luncheon. Cecil continued occupied with his book. Mildred was quiet and absent in manner she did not hear several attempts of Lord Charles St. Pierre to engage her in conversation ; nor did she listen to the discussion as to the afternoon's occupation, though once or twice appealed to. Unwittingly she found herself included in the proposed boating expedition to a ruined castle, three miles down the loch ;—Lord Charles, the sailor, of course commanded it. Lady Invergarry, who mistakenly clung to the belief that she liked water excursions, and was not afraid of being upset ; Lady Catherine St. Pierre, who conscientiously “ did ” every expedition proposed ; Mildred and Mr. Lucy with a boatman or two, were the crew and passengers. Lady Adelaide St. Pierre preferred a heather walk, which she enjoyed alone ; for Cecil started for a solitary ramble, and Mr. Cameron did not feel inclined to do more than smoke a cigar and discuss the prospects of the following day's deer stalking with Sandy.

CHAPTER XLIV.

“————— I must say the words,
The old, old words—I love thee: to thy heart
I leave their boundless meaning.”—*Unpublished MS.*

“THE path is bad, my Lord; better keep the lower track,” said one of the boatmen, who followed Lady Invergarry with shawls and cloaks from the little pier where the returning party had disembarked. She at once paused: she was scrupulously careful to follow the advice of her dependants, though she would have cavilled at the suggestions of her brother or nephew.

“There is not the least fear,” Lord Charles replied: “I was over it yesterday. Miss Effingham, what do you say? It is so much more picturesque.” He was longing for a walk with her.

“But it is longer, and so steep,” urged Lady Catherine.

“It would be very foolish to try it,” said Lady Invergarry, doubtfully, and glancing towards the boatman for support in her opinion.

“There is no fear for a light foot, my Lady, with a little care.” Scotchmen seldom answer as the querist wishes.

“Come, Miss Effingham, no fear for you,” exclaimed Lord Charles.

“We will keep the lower walk,” said Lady Invergarry.

“Sailors never appreciate difficulties,” observed Mr. Lucy. For some inexplicable reason, the remark decided Mildred to try the path: she rather disliked Mr. Lucy. “Now, was not this worth climbing that steep ascent for?” asked Lord Charles, enthusiastically, as they turned a corner of the hill-side, and the Strath lay before them—purple-blue in the shadow, crimson and orange as sunset clouds in the evening light.

“But we seem coming to a difficulty,” said Miss Effingham, who was insensible to her companion’s enjoyment. A difficulty, indeed! The path, winding on the face of a smooth but very precipitous hill, so steep that, looking down, its base was not in view; and, without stooping, the short heather, brittle from the summer drought, might be gathered on the upper side. A lowlander would have said that Mildred and Lord Charles were following a mere goat-track, but the natives and their ponies considered it a very fair road. Mildred was active and sure-footed, Lord Charles was a sailor, and they

rather enjoyed the exciting stumbles, which it was d
avoid. But suddenly the path, already sufficiently
broke off entirely, and the bare earth surface show
had slipped to some unseen platform beneath. Tracks
were printed on the yet soft clay. "It gave them
said Mildred. "There is only a yard or two to cre
not afraid." Lord Charles, the sailor, did not st
calculate the strength of landsmen's heads: he nimbl
across, not resting a second on any spot, and balanc
self perfectly.

"I cannot help you much," he said: "you must
yourself."

"Rely on yourself,"—a vain exhortation, often a
oftenest when its fulfilment is impossible. She made
step well and courageously, but a pebble gave way t
foot, and rolled rattlingly down to what seemed at the
an immeasurable depth. She watched its disappear
a giddy fascination: she caught at a spray of heath
grew above; it gave way, carrying with it a clot c
She grew pale; she seemed unable to advance; her lo
on one spot had borne down the slight ledge of cl
had barely given support to Lord Charles's hasty t
was slowly yielding. "Come on! come on!" he e
hastily, leaning forward as far as he could to her as
but he might not with safety add his weight to the
sinking track. As he spoke Miss Effingham seeme
all presence of mind: she grasped a boulder stone w
jected near; fortunately with little force, or it wo
come away. Her lips grew livid; she seemed ready
It was a moment of very serious danger,—a second r
that heavy stone she clung to would fall and carry her
But Lord Charles was not a prey to nerves; though, eve
a passing shiver of horror at her situation ran thro
veins. There was but one apparent chance of relea
A young dwarf birch had taken root close to where h
he tied his cravat and pocket-handkerchief togetl
fastened one end to the inch-thick stem; holding th
he threw himself across to Mildred, and supporting h
to lead her across. But she had lost consciousness.
strong effort he drew her away. The rock went cras
roaring down, shaking yet more the unsound track:
not bear the weight of two—slowly it slipped away
train on the ill-rooted birch shrub increased al

Lord Charles watched the knots he had so hastily fastened with intense anxiety. Thank God, they had been tied by a sailor. Supporting himself as only a sailor could along the bare cliff, he managed to reach firm footing. He placed Mildred on a broad platform of luxuriant heather, with a murmured thanksgiving, for the danger had been very real. Now that it was past, he felt great happiness that he had been able to do something for her; though, after all, his risk was trivial in his eyes. She seemed ready to faint, and unable to rise, from dizziness. He ventured to take her hand, as he tried to reassure her of her safety. There was something in his tone which restored her. She rose hastily, and with some common-place thanks, remarked that they "ought not to delay, as it was late." With averted eyes, she turned from the scene of her great risk.

"You must still be giddy, Miss Effingham. Will you not lean on me? the track is wider here." For some insufficient reason she excused herself; but a sudden faintness over-coming her, she was forced to accept his offered support. They walked awhile in silence. Each minute seemed an hour to Lord Charles, for crowds of doubts and hopes thronged upon his mind. They reached the edge of the wood, through which half a mile of gravelled walk led to Strathmore House. Consciousness of any defined fact is often like leaven to the mind, reducing it, when most chaotic, to order and consciousness. Very earnestly, with a touching humility and simplicity, he told Mildred that he loved her; that he felt his happiness was bound up in hers; that he could not hope she would have yet any regard for him. He only asked her not to reject him entirely, but to feel kindly for him, while he tried to make himself worthy of her. He was very inferior to her, he knew, in everything; but he offered as true and devoted a love as any man could, and under her influence he would become very different from what he was then. It was a very boyish—but not the less earnest—declaration; yet it did not awake a spark of sympathy in Mildred. She was too young in womanly experience to value the simple love he offered to her; too young not to esteem giving, rather than receiving, worship, the true happiness of love. She was abrupt, and scarcely kind, in her total extinction of his hopes. So little did she sympathise with his strong emotion, that she forgot even to withdraw her arm from his, while she inflicted keenest pain on his affectionate, honest heart. Stung to the quick,

he hastily changed the subject, and carelessly spoke of the weather, the scenery,—talking against time. “Do you know she said casually, “now that I can look back quietly on the memory of it, I begin to think I was in danger at that earth-slip.”

“Danger!” exclaimed Lord Charles; but he remembered that at that moment he could not with grace enhance his services.

“I suppose you thought nothing of it,” she continued: “but even now I do not like to think of that bottomless hill-side.

“Better not to speak of it: there was danger; but it is over.” She became very grave and thoughtful. After a pause she said, “I must have been half-unconscious: I forgot the details of my escape: I owe it to you, Lord Charles. I shall always—”

Cecil Erle stood before them: he was out of breath, and visibly alarmed. “Thank God you are safe!” he exclaimed. “I heard from Lucy of your rashness. I was myself stopped by that earth-slip an hour ago. How did you cross?”

“I believe I owe much to Lord Charles. I lost my head, but we are safe.” She had now withdrawn herself from her companion’s support. He drew back with more haughtiness than often appeared in his manner, and Cecil took the vacant place by Mildred.

“Thank God you are safe!” he repeated in a low voice. She laughed slightly—strange at such a moment!—and described the scene of her peril jestingly.

“You are a wonderful anomaly,” exclaimed Cecil.

“Very inscrutable,” she replied, in the same unearnest way she had all along maintained; then more gravely, “Do you try to understand me, Cecil: I think you would be sorry you did.”

“I do understand you,” he said, emphatically.

She started, trembled then. “Very possibly; but let us speak of other things—of yourself, your prospects, ambition

“Do they interest you?”

“Of course.”

“For heaven’s sake leave conventionalisms, Mildred. I have no ambitions, as you call them, are yet in the bud; but someday they will interest you: they shall.”

“Are you going to write novels, then; or has not your mind grown too prosaic to be exciting even in books? Do not let your governesses absorb all modern heroism. When you have

interest society, you must take the form of one, and write an autobiography."

Cecil saw that earnest talk was at that moment out of the question. Miss Effingham was over excited: he adopted her tone of *badinage*. The walk seemed a long one to both. Lord Charles had, on quitting Mildred's side, struck into a bye path: he was bitterly hurt by Mildred's manner. That evening he bade adieu to Sir James Cameron and Lady Invergarry, on the plea of a sudden necessity to apply for an appointment. His going seemed the signal for a general break-up of the party at Strathmore. The Flintshire family moved south two days afterwards. The Effinghams followed: they had a visit to pay in Yorkshire on their homeward route. Mr. Erle returned to bear that devoted sportsman, Sir Thomas Multon, company in his shooting lodge for a few days longer; when he promised to rejoin the Effinghams at their home. Mildred did not tell her mother of Lord Charles St. Pierre's proposal: even had a greater confidence existed between her and Lady Effingham, the episode did not seem of sufficient importance to be further discussed. He, of course, was silent; and his mother and sisters never suspected the cause of his sudden departure. Of a thousand previous amourettes of his they had been the confidantes: they did not perceive that his silence about Miss Effingham was indicative of a deeper feeling than any he had before indulged.



CHAPTER XLV.

"Le père ouvre la porte au matériel époux;
Mais toujours l'idéal entre par la fenêtre."

A CALM November evening,—the bare woods are softened to beauty by a crimson sunset, which lights up the motionless clouds that have hung over the dank steaming country all day like a pall. Sir Harry Effingham looks annoyed, perplexed, while his wife, in her loving, kindly manner, discusses Mildred's future: he seems half-incredulous, half-persuaded by her.

"We must not sacrifice her permanent welfare to our own personal predilections," she says, with gentle earnestness, in a tone of self-sacrifice. "We must not, in our admiration of Cecil, forget that the hopes with which he inspires us are as

yet utterly visionary. Granting his ultimate success in life, at present he is absolutely penniless.

"Mildred inherits all I possess," interrupted Sir Harry.

"Possibly; but, meantime, if she marries Cecil, they will be entirely dependent on you: you cannot afford to give them more than enough for bare necessities. Is it right to place them in so trying a position?"

"Herbert will not marry."

"Why not? You underrate him, Harry. He would make an excellent husband; so affectionate and steady!"

"Pshaw! But setting aside my own wishes," Sir Harry continued, very gravely, "I will never trifle with Mildred's happiness. If her choice falls on Cecil, I will not for any consideration thwart it."

"Mildred has not very deep feelings, I think," said her mother. "How quickly she got over that absurd business of Mr. Harley's! If you value her real happiness, Harry, be sure it will be best secured by a provision for her future position, not by her indulgence in every passing romance."

"Cecil is, I think, attached to her."

"So is Herbert."

"That is absurd. It is impossible she could like him."

"Dear Harry, do not hastily consent to any engagement with Cecil. Believe me, it will not end well. Wait awhile till he has done something—secured something."

With much persuasion of this kind, Lady Effingham induced Sir Harry to promise that he would not encourage or sanction Cecil's attentions to his daughter, unless he perceived that her happiness was concerned. "In that case, no worldly prudence shall interfere," he said, sternly. "I will use no harshness to her, nor permit any." Lady Effingham smiled: she had gained her point. As for Mildred's happiness, it was old-fashioned romance to think that a month's disappointment, even were there any, would much affect it. Cecil was really a wretched match for her daughter: he was, as to fortune, quite an adventurer. It would not be right to expose Mildred to the privations of five or six hundred a-year,—all Sir Harry could possibly allow them during his lifetime, without Utopian sacrifices not to be thought of. As to Erlesmere, Herbert, with his domestic tastes, was certain to marry. Meantime, it was silly to imagine that Mildred must choose between either of the brothers. Mr. Cameron had been evidently struck by her at Strathmore; Lord Conington, whom they met in York-

shire, was fascinated by her singing. Mildred had been hitherto quite a child, but during their late visits she had grown more sensible, more anxious to please, more careful about her appearance; and she was improved in grace and manner. Really a hole-and-corner engagement with Cecil must, if possible, be avoided; at least until after another season in London. Such thoughts passed through Lady Effingham's mind as she strolled through the gardens with Sir Harry, listening to his occasional dicta.

About three weeks had passed since their return home. Herbert was still in Ireland, at Cahirmore, whither he had gone the same day that the Effinghams started for Scotland;—meantime Cecil was to be Sir Harry's guest in his brother's absence. Was Mildred happy? Had she "got over," to use her mother's expression, the "Harley affair?" We left her at Strathmore shallowly gay, desperately brilliant, with a stunned heart, a disorganised mind, a versatile keen fancy, uncontrolled by the make-weights of fixed feelings. Cast adrift from her former habits of thought, floating hither and thither as each social circumstance influenced her course, she had lost much of the natural originality which had been unpleasing to the world she lived in. To an acute observer, it was evident, for all her agreeability, that her gaiety was forced: but few observe so long as they are entertained. Her visit to Thurwick was eminently successful. She had sung, acted, ridden to cover—no further—talked poetic wit, and written witty poetry, till every one who was not envious was dazzled. True, others of the party also sang, acted, rode, and were witty; but there was an indescribable wild grace in Mildred's slightest action—a peculiar piquancy in her commonest small talk. As Lady Effingham had observed, she had become in all respects more attentive to her dress, her appearance, and the thousand little particulars which heighten grace and beauty, and care for which distinguishes the charming woman from the fair child. It may seem singular that at such an epoch in her life this improvement should have taken place: it was the natural accompaniment to the birth of her womanhood. A certain unconscious desire for admiration—not acknowledged, and instinctive, therefore in no way allied to vanity—had wrought in her the change. Cecil's society had contributed to it: his words left echoes in her thoughts, even when they were themselves forgotten. He had thrown a torchlight gleam on her existence: by it she saw much of the

machinery of passion and impulse within her; hitherto undissected, though it had so influenced her late existence. She began to know her wants; she formed an ideal of life suited to the capacities she perceived in her own nature, and she gropingly sought for its realization. Mildred was unconscious of these changes in her mental structure. She did not indulge in thought; vague instinct led her,—thought was unendurable; yet thought was in a manner thrust upon her on her return to Effingham,—to the scenes which had been Eden a month ago, now wintry and desolate. She talked a good deal to her acquaintance, contrary to her former habit; for she had always been reserved to all but those with whom she could, or fancied she could, find sympathy in tastes, in intellectual feelings. She often laughed vehemently at any commonplace incident, scarce worthy of a smile. At the piano, she sang the merest rubbish of noisy French music, strangely alternating with weird minor fantasies of her own, full of unconnected discords, abrupt transitions, and devoid of pathos though expressive of pain. She startled Lady Mary de Broke by her rattling conversation, so different from her monosyllables: *au beau milieu* of a tale concerning three of the children, as ponderous and involved as any epic, Mildred recklessly asked a totally irrelevant question. Offence could no further go. "Mildred Effingham has been quite spoiled by something: she is not the least as she used to be; her head has been turned," Lady Mary said to her husband the next evening.

"Just as well it should be while she is young, my dear Mary; there will be the longer after-life to set it right again."

His wife shook her head and thought of her little girl. "Lady Effingham tells me that Mildred is more successful in society than formerly. My dear Basil, the world is very destructive." Mr. de Broke smiled, for he was an optimist; but he did not attack his wife's favourite hobby. "Have you seen Cecil Erle?" she continued; "he was to arrive to-day. I hear he is quite charming. What a pity his brother is not more like him!"

"Very probably you will change your opinion on that subject," said Mr. de Broke, drily; "but now, Mary, I think tea must be ready."

"I wonder if Mildred will marry either of the brothers. Sir Harry wishes it; but, I think, not Lady Effingham. Of course, it would be Cecil, but for his want of fortune."

"Why, Mary, you used not to be so 'worldly,'"

husband said, with a smile: "meantime you have put sugar in my tea."

"My dear Basil! But have you heard that Mr. Harden, the old member for Holmvale, is dangerously ill?—gout in the head, they say."

"Poor fellow! So I heard."

"And some people insist that Herbert will stand for the borough on the Radical interest: can it be true?"

"Not on the Radical interest probably, if at all. I rather think Sir Harry has promised his to Cecil."

"How soon will the election be?"

"Before long, probably. I rather hope Herbert may stand."

"You don't say so, Basil!"

"Yes, my dear; now leave me in peace: I want to find a passage in Chrysostom."

The good wife produced her knitting; but as she formed the small scarlet bootlings—there were always children of an age to wear them in her household—her thoughts ran busily on Mildred and her newly acquired "worldliness," Herbert's Radicalism, Cecil's perfection, Lady Effingham's kind heart, and Sir Harry's want of affection for his daughter. By an easy transition, she plunged into reflections on her own reflections—too voluminous, too simply good, to be worth publication. Excellence is a drug in story-books.



CHAPTER XLVI.

"I had a vision when the night was late:
A youth came riding toward a palace gate;
He rode a horse with wings, that would have flown,
But that his heavy rider kept him down."—TENNYSON.

It was on a fine afternoon, as we have said, that Sir Harry and Lady Effingham conjugally discussed their daughter's future; and Mildred had taken advantage of it to prolong her walk more than usual. She strolled on and on, mechanically, with a vacant mind, watching the whirling leaves as they danced to the moaning wind; beginning over and over again the same dull task of counting the deer as they pastured in groups, or measuring the advance of each rifted cloud that sailed athwart the red sun, yet without a consecutive thought

or defined object. She paused on a knoll which commanded a view of the high road. The coach came along it as she gazed, and drew up at the corner from which a private path led to Effingham. Cecil got down; she could distinguish his brown travelling-cap. In a moment the coach was gone; but, even before it was in motion, he was springing over the stile which led to the field she was in. He did not observe her as he walked quickly past; but she watched him with an awakened interest and involuntary admiration. His figure was magnificent in its proportions, which yet were graceful in their symmetry. His head was massive, yet not large for his height. His features were good; expressive of repose: a compressed mouth and open nostril gave character to their almost over-regularity. His eyes were closely set; if observers sought to read his thoughts in them, they only found that he was reading theirs, while his own were impenetrable. His manner was frank and attractive in general; nor did he affect superiority over other men, though his talents might have warranted a little Vivian Greyism. If he piqued himself on never failing in his enterprises, yet he managed to secure the wishes of his companions for his success: he attempted nothing that could not be achieved without offence. Pre-eminent among his passions was ambition for success,—for rising in the world; pre-eminent among his qualities was caution. Quality and passion were reconcilable in their results. Hence he did not waste himself as most men do by internal conflicts, nor expose himself to the disappointment of unfulfilled wishes. His chief characteristic was balance. If he had ambition, he had equal self-control; determination was softened by a prudent suppleness of principle: wit was tempered by discretion. Dislikes were seldom strongly marked in him, because it was unwise to give way to hate. Affections were kept in due subjection, because it was equally unwise to love with *abandon*. In him were no sharp angles of opinion to hurt the prejudice of others. He was so many-sided, that no man could think him inconsistent: yet he affected earnestness of thought, and impressed his acquaintance with faith in the fixedness of his principles. He had already gathered round him a knot of young disciples, won by his college and school success to admire, by his tact, to love him. But he was poor; he must rise. He took care to *cultivate* the esteem of one or two elders high in official life, *with whom* he had contrived an acquaintance, as well as to

secure the applause of his own contemporaries. He attained the especial approval of a great man who was in want of talent for his party; the great man mentioned him to others as very promising. He had, young as he was, climbed the more difficult rung of the upward ladder.

Nevertheless, though he was starting on his course with the prestige of talent, Cecil knew—for hope did not blind his foresight—that he could no more calculate on ultimate success than the traveller can be sure of a serene afternoon because he walks in the light of a golden sunrise. His prospects in official life—for he had chosen the bar merely as a nominal profession—made him anxious to secure some more solid standing-ground than he then possessed, whereon to build his fortune. To be “very promising,” is a reputation that soon wears out, if unfollowed by performance; and as he was nobody’s younger son or nephew, the performance of his early promise rested much with himself. The present moment was a turning-point in his career, at which he felt himself almost further from the goal he hoped to attain than he had done; because he perceived how far off, and knew how difficult of attainment, it was. But he was far from despairing of success: he was not a prey to exaggeration, either in hope or despondency. That very day, as he travelled from London to Effingham, Cecil heard from a fellow-passenger of the dangerous illness of the member for Holmvale. To be returned for that borough in Mr. Harden’s place would probably secure to him party consideration; and, in any case, give him an opportunity to establish a more extended reputation than the good words of a few red-tapists could. A marriage, or, meantime, an engagement, with Mildred, would ensure him Sir Harry’s interest; give him a sufficient interest and station in the borough: in fact, make his return certain. Besides, he considered she would be a very attractive and useful helpmate in his career: she would secure him a perfectly suited property at her father’s death; meantime, a moderate income. His pace quickened as he reviewed these facts, and he strode rapidly by Mildred, in an unusually abstracted mood. She looked after him with a momentary disappointment, that he had not observed her; then slowly retracing her steps, she passed through the evening damps of the chilly woods to Effingham. She heard his voice in the drawing-room as she went to hers; but she was disinclined in that phase of *newsiness* and conventionalism to greet him. The arrival is more

disagreeable, if possible, than the departure of friends. We suffer from disappointing presence more than from the "delicious torment" of parting, with its consoling beliefs in the perfections of the friend just gone.

CHAPTER XLVII.

" ————— Amor può far perfetti
Gli animi qui, ma piu perfetti in cielo."

MICHEL AGNOLO.

SIR HARRY's observation was quickened by his conversation with Lady Effingham: he watched with unusual attention his daughter's manner to Cecil. She was more silent than she had permitted herself to be of late when he was in the room, and her father thought she rather shunned than otherwise Cecil's unconcealed devotion to her. Cecil sat next to her most of the evening, and never was he more brilliant. He alternately talked of the world of men and the world of books — ingenuously, though covertly, applying story and quotation so as to act upon the tastes he had observed in Mildred. He affected candour, and led her to imagine that she was revolutionizing his mind. In short, he laid siege to the "passionate brain" which he had told her she possessed, flattering, while he excited her imagination. First loves are involuntary, but there is always a certain consciousness and mental action in those that follow. Cecil had guessed, from a thousand trivial circumstances, that another had been before him in Mildred's heart: he skilfully introduced himself as interpreter of her feelings, and invested himself with all the interest of a prophet to her restless mind. In Mildred's circumstances, and to a nature such as hers, a craving to be understood is the uppermost want; and the first person she meets who, with tact, professes an insight into her condition and a sympathy with her feelings, becomes a temporary all-in-all to her. No matter what her previous sufferings have been, they are for a time healed by this imagined comprehension of them: she stands still in life's journey, and finds a heaven in sympathy. There is no need of saying how transient is the delusion. First love is an affair of mutual congratulation and forward-glancing hope; the affections that succeed in after life are founded on *mutual* commiseration and sympathetic retrospection: they are more selfish and exacting in their demands; having their

source in heart-poverty rather than in heart-abundance. Cecil did not talk much to Mildred of his prospects in life, nor of his opinions or feelings, except as they related to hers. At first, as we have said, she shunned intercourse with him: it was natural, even without an appeal to the excuse of feminine timidity. Her return to Effingham had brought again the sense of desolateness and isolation, which sat on her like a nightmare. But Cecil quickly recovered his position as her interpreter to herself; and, after a few gloaming rides and mornings' converse, his society became, not only a pleasure, but a necessity to her. Herbert had had far better opportunities: Mildred had even implored his sympathy; but, poor boy, he knew how to give better than to gain love. A week of Indian summer passed brightly and calmly away. Cecil transacted much business within its limits. Independent of his almost constant attention to Mildred, he had several conversations with Sir Harry and Lady Effingham. With Mr. Dickson, his brother's factor, he visited one or two neighbouring proprietors; he spent a morning at Holmvale, and the afternoon in writing a carefully corrected address. It was a stirring time for him, yet no abstraction ever dulled his conversation with Mildred: he quoted, criticized, expounded the mysteries of soul-lore as if he were devoted to no other study.

And Herbert? He lingered at Cahirmore week after week, dreading to leave its kindly hospitality for the trying associations of his own home. By tacit agreement, he and Lord Clancahir had never spoken of the circumstances which had immediately preceded his visit to Ireland. Lord Clancahir imagined that Herbert guessed the cause of Mr. Harley's abrupt departure; Herbert thought that his friend must understand the reason for Cecil's return from abroad. Letters from Mr. Dickson mentioned the return of the Effingham family, soon after Cecil's arrival, and Mr. Harden's dangerous illness; and the writer added some remarks on the advisability of Mr. Erle's return at this juncture. Herbert showed Lord Clancahir his factor's suggestions. It was a fine day: the friends were on horseback; and, whatever be the cause, at no time is intercourse so unrestrained as when companions are riding together through picturesque scenery. "I must leave you, Clancahir."

"You are right: it is time for you to act."

"*But how? At least, about Holmvale?*"

"Act with a good heart, and you will be sure to act with a good head."

Herbert remained silent for awhile; then said, "You are right: yet it is hard to work without any appreciation, but rather contempt, from those you desire to help. I feel every concession of mine will be thought weakness."

"Never think of results, Erle: expectance is the worst exercise a man can put his mind to. Have faith in the most forbidding future."

"I had for a time—when I last left Cahirmore."

"You had confidence, perhaps; not faith. Confidence is the Anglo-Saxon imitation of the Eastern principle—a very pinchbeck copy."

"It was kind of Lady Effingham to write to me, was it not?"

"Very thoughtful."

"Do you know these Flintshires?"

"Every one does: at least, *those* Flintshires. I know Flintshire, the son, rather well, and his wife slightly. She is very different from his mother or sisters in every way—thousand times better and a thousand times worse."

"Extremes in the same person must make her interesting."

"Oh! very 'interesting.' I wonder if Miss Effingham will ever meet her?" said Lord Clancahir.

"Why?"

"It would be throwing fire on a powder magazine."

Herbert did not reply: he could not discuss Mildred. That evening he told his servant he should return to England next day, and ordered him to prepare accordingly. His manner was absent during the evening: he scarcely replied to some kind words of regret for his departure which Lady Clancahir expressed; yet they did not fall on an ungrateful ear. November wind was moaning through the oak woods; his windows rattled, the fastenings were out of order; the velvet curtains rustled fitfully; and the bituminous firewood, peculiar to Irish bogs, blazed with a light more sleep-dispelling than the day-glare. He paced up and down awhile; he re-read Lady Effingham's letter from Strathmore, then his father's; he opened his travelling desk to put them up. Some old page of his former diary fell out as he did so; the date caught his eye: it was the record of his thoughts the night before he left Cahirmore three months ago. He glanced rapidly through it. How changed life was to him since then! He took a pen which lay at hand, and hastily added to the manuscript:

"Again I enter on a new existence; my silly hopes were quickly blasted. Henceforward I must be content to do and also to suffer. I said I would begin life: I said it should be bright; that I could escape the cloud which had haunted me since my birth; that I could overcome deficiency, and work out my ambitions, as more gifted men do. Soon my delusion was dispelled; soon I found my brilliant cloud-castles dispersing: vanishing, while I thought I grasped them. And now reality lies before me—a dreary wilderness: the distant light which should guide me is dim and often obscured. I have no fellow-pilgrim: I cannot claim companionship with others. All outrun me. I am the stepping-stone to others' fortune, nothing more. Oh, God, it is hard, hard to bear! I am very lonely. Clancahir is kind, and his mother; but they are on another plane from me: they cannot know my needs. And now I must return, and school myself to bear this long suffering before me. Yet, if she be happy——" He abruptly left off; he could no longer command himself to write; he threw himself upon his knees. We will not further intrude on his private anguish. Half-instinctively, he sought for its alleviation from the only Helper. A word or two of Lady Clancahir's, which fell from her accidentally, recurred to his memory, as, idealess, from agitation, he prostrated himself:—"Selfish love is idolatry, entailing the keenest pain known to men: true love is worship, and shelters us from all suffering. Idolatry and worship comprise the good and evil of action." It seemed to him that he had been gross in his idolatry, his choice of his own gods. With bitter self-crimination, he reviewed his love, and saw its selfishness; his ambitions, and their selfishness; his projected virtues, and their selfishness; and he could feel no security for his future truth of worship. He felt so weak, so powerless, to do better: his attempted good had been but subtler evil. No happiness seemed before him, not even the delusive hope that he was doing right.

He prepared to start the following morning, pale, and harassed by a sleepless night. A lamplight breakfast was prepared for him in the large dining-hall: he shiveringly stood by the heatless fire in the antique grate, and waited for the hack car that was to take him to Waterford. The steamer was to start early, and Lord Clancahir had bid him farewell over-night. How different all the circumstances were from those of his last departure! Then he was so full of hope; *friendship, love, social kindness, personal usefulness, seemed*

glittering within his reach. Now all were withered, and he must endure existence among his blighted aspirations: he must even handle daily his shattered idols. The horse climbed the hills which enclosed the valley of Cahirmore;—a pale grey landscape opened around him as the day dawned; the watery sky above, was spread with clouds. The road was monotonously white in the colourless twilight,—type of his career, he thought.



CHAPTER XLVIII.

“ Another love also there is,
Which desire is so constreyned
That it is but wille feyned;
Alle in wynninge and in profit,
Sich love settith his delite.”—CHAUCER.

EVEN in November, how charming was Effingham! As they fell, the dead leaves were removed: the gardens were yet brilliant. The touch of winter seemed averted. Within, new books, new music, new contrivances of comfort made one glad that in name at least he had come, and given an excuse for the more unrestrained enjoyment of in-door life. Mildred and Cecil found a small octagon chamber, off the principal drawing-room, best suited to their morning talks. There, secure from interruption, they read and conversed in fragments; and Cecil told her histories of people whom he had met—adding interpretations, which seemed to put into words Mildred's thoughts. It was a relief—yet with the dangerous after consequence, that her undefined visions grew into realities when thus embodied. She thought of little else but these revelations of the world of passion: there seemed in life nothing else that could interest. He fed her thirst for them abundantly. He knew not how injurious to her mind it was, or he might not have been so rash; but, so as he led her captive to his worldly necessities, he did not very earnestly care for her ultimate good. Nor did Lady Effingham calculate how fast this influence of Cecil's might gain ground. People judge of others by themselves. She knew nothing of Mildred's vehemence of feeling: in everything she miscalculated her. No common rules applied; and Lady Effingham, though *persevering*, was essentially common-place. She had not *genius enough* to cope by subtlety with the strong emotions of her

daughter, nor to meet in social conflict Cecil's extreme tact. So he and Miss Effingham disposed of their time almost exactly as he willed, yet without apparent disregard of her mother's wishes. The octagon-room was near the conservatory, and its atmosphere was a perfume bath. A piccolo piano occupied a niche; Cecil's manuscript collection of favourite poems lay on the small centre-table; Petrarch and Shelley near it, with two or three volumes of lately published verses, which were like undesecrated temples to him and Mildred, wherein their taste might wander at will, uncramped by pre-judgment. There is no more true and unrestrained intercourse than when two lovers or two friends of either sex read together the words of some new poet. A deeper insight is gained by each of the other's soul, as the unhacknied thought flashes down its depths with sudden illumination of recesses, which, whether from timidity or self-ignorance, have hitherto lain concealed. Cecil had finished reading aloud a passage of excellent beauty. His lustrous eyes were fixed on Mildred, watching the effect: she was silent; steeped in enjoyment of the musical verse, the unrestrained yet unexaggerated expression of the secrets of her heart: the explanation of those conflicting emotions which had overflowed her mind, as a stormy sea might inundate a plain. Neither spoke for a while, neither criticised. "I have had dreams like these," at length said Cecil, in a low voice; "and you, Mildred, you have surely felt some of the dizzy excitement this book describes."

"They were not dreams to me," she answered, slowly; and as one who is bound by a spell to speak, so measuredly her accents came, and yet not thoughtfully.

Cecil looked at her with half-perplexed interest. "Mildred, young as you are, you have known storms. I read your history as if it were in a book before me: I understand your wildest thoughts. Shall I tell you why? and how? Six months ago, I was a boy ignorant of this world; my present life is as different from my former one as a picture is from a print. I met an ideal—at least I fancied her an ideal—woman: superior to me in all wherein a woman may with grace be superior to a man. She was of a completed beauty, both of mind and form; she was kind to me, raw student that I was! she taught me to love; she raised for me the veil to a new world of feeling, beautiful as the tropic zone is, compared with the cold north. My love might have remained worship,

but she stooped to instruct my taste: we read together, we talked of what we read. I loved her as she thus condescended. She must have known how it was with me. One day, one bright spring day, when I could not but be confident, I told her of my love. She laughed at me, Mildred: she refused it; and I was left heavenless, yet knowing good and evil. I was at first stunned, then cynical. I remembered I was penniless, and determined to rise in men's estimation, and then laugh at them. If it might be, I hoped some day to fling back the scorn she had flung on me. I thought no one but myself had ever suffered so much from misplaced love, from a sense of isolation, from the bitter gnawing cynicism which distorted life. I met you at Strathmore; I understood you: I could reconcile the frivolity of your manner with the stormy emotions which raged beneath. For a thousand reasons, I was fascinated, as others must have been; but I felt a deeper interest than others could: I saw that we were alike suffering; I longed to offer and receive sympathy. I sought your society; each day I discovered more and more our need of mutual friendship. We were for awhile separated: absent from you, my life became a blank; I——" A footman, devoid of tact, who naturally thought that brothers, after a five years' separation would not stand on ceremony, suddenly opened the door of the inner room, private to most visitors, and announced Mr. Erle. With instant adaptation to the circumstance, Cecil advanced to meet his brother; adroitly detaining him in the drawing-room, while, with cordiality, he fulfilled all, and more than all, the proprieties of fraternal greeting.

Herbert Erle was very pale; his manner was stiff and rather cold: he appeared to little advantage; yet his brother was astonished, and in a measure confounded, by the complete change which had taken place since their painful school-boy parting. Habitual suffering had given Herbert an air of self-control which added a certain dignity to his worn figure, and redeemed it, slight and boyish as were its outlines, from any charge of unmanliness. He had not the tact of Cecil, but his natural sensitiveness made him quick to adapt his tone to that of his companions. Though pale almost to lividness, his manner was composed; he sat, turned from the light, and the nervous quivering of his lip was not perceptible. "I am so glad to see you, my dear fellow!" Cecil said, with warmth; "but when did you arrive? I had no idea you were here last night."

"I arrived late: I had a slow passage."

"I should have breakfasted with you, if I had had a notion you had come: I have been wanting to talk over a hundred things with you. I am very glad you are here," Cecil repeated.

"Yes; I determined to come over at once," said Herbert, quietly. "I trust Lady Effingham and Mildred are well?"

"Mildred is in the inner room. We were in the midst of a literary discussion when you appeared: she is getting ready some authorities wherewith to confute me presently. Milady is writing letters in her morning room, I fancy."

An unaccountable embarrassment constrained Cecil as he spoke of Mildred to his brother; yet Herbert did not move a muscle. Cecil was not sorry that, at the moment, Lady Effingham appeared: she seemed relieved to see the brothers together, and welcomed Herbert with real pleasure. "Where is Mildred?" she asked: "does she know that you have returned, Bertie?"

"I believe so. Cecil says she is engaged; pray do not disturb her;" for Lady Effingham had turned towards the half-open door.

"Her engagements are not very important," said her mother; and she summoned Miss Effingham with soft-toned imperiousness.

Mechanically, as was usual, Mildred came in; she held out her hand with indifference to Herbert. He barely touched it; he scarcely looked at her. Perhaps, had he observed her fixed paleness, he might not have feared to watch her: he expected to see a cloudless countenance. "I am so glad you like Clancahir; he is an odd fellow—very crotchety, but of decided talent. Fine place, Cahirmore; is it not? Very Irish, I should think," rattled Cecil. "What capital farm offices you are planning, Herbert! Erlesmere is very much improved, but rather gloomy still: I would try and make gardens, at any difficulty, to give life to the old house."

"I fear it would be difficult to make Erlesmere cheerful."

"Men do not understand the art," said Lady Effingham; "now, in a month I could make that frowning stern old house smile."

"Can you spare me an hour or two for business, Cecil?" asked Herbert, with some abruptness.

"Of course! I will walk back with you now, if you like, or join you in the afternoon."

"That will be best," interposed Lady Effingham; "stay for luncheon, Bertie. Mildred and I have some visits to get through in the afternoon: I want her to drive to Beaulieu with me."

Herbert looked towards Mildred, who was dreamily inattentive. He rose to go, and would not be detained. "You are growing as uncivil as you used to be, Bertie," said Lady Effingham, as she affectionately shook hands with him before he left.

"Becoming a regular owl in an ivy bush," he replied, with a forced smile, as he left the room.

Cecil reflected a second; then he said, "I may as well walk home with him. You and Mildred are going to devote the day to duty: I will follow your example."

"I fear Cecil has not much heart," observed Lady Effingham, when he had gone. "It is a sad want. I have ordered the pony carriage at two, Mildred: you will be ready, my love?"

"Of course."

CHAPTER XLIX.

*"Odo una voce mormorar d' intorno
Che per l'orrecchie mi ferisce il core,
De le vicine nozze d' Amarilli."*—GUARINI.

HERBERT had walked so fast that his brother did not at once overtake him; when he did, he said—"I've been leading such an idle life lately, that I'm quite out of wind: I fear I can't walk at this pace, and discuss our family polity too."

"You are thinking of standing for Holmvale, are you not?"

"It has been a dream of mine; but so many objections exist, that I don't much hope its realization."

"Will your return for this Parliament much advance your prospects in life?" Herbert asked in a tone of business-like interrogatory.

"By ten years. I shall at once have an opening, which else I might spend my best time merely in trying to attain." Herbert remained silent for a moment. His brother continued—"Since my return I have sounded the principal voters. Sir Harry has promised me his influence, second only to yours; and one or two of the chief townspeople at Holm-*vale*, of themselves, asked me to stand."

"I am not considered a possible candidate," thought Herbert bitterly.

"A great deal depends on this," continued Cecil: "more than at present I wish to allude to. I may count on your support, of course, Bertie?" he added affectionately; but Herbert answered coldly, "I cannot make you a decided promise yet."

"There is no one likely to oppose me, unless you start a candidate," laughingly replied Cecil, in utter ignorance of the struggle within his brother of self-sacrifice *versus* inclination. "But you are no politician, my dear fellow, are you? Do you wish any pledges from me? An explanation of my principles, eh?" he inquired with a covert sneer. "Seriously," he continued, "I shall be at least as creditable a member as old Harden. You see, if I miss this chance, I shall fall into the class of mere political drudges;—have to push my way by Heaven knows what dirty work! perhaps even fall back on the bar for a livelihood, and probably starve. Now, if I get in for Holmvale, I shall have at once a sort of independence: have an opening, as I said."

"But you will not be less penniless than before," Herbert said, slowly.

"I see my way, I think, on the road to fortune, if I once manage that first step."

"By a marriage with Mildred Effingham?" Herbert said, with effort.

"You have quicker perception than I thought, Bertie. Yes, to be frank with you, I do look to that with very great anxiety, as I should gain by it a firmer footing in the world than I could otherwise hope for. Besides, she is a very charming person: do you not think so?" he added suddenly; for the thought flashed upon him that Herbert might have been the one before him in Mildred's heart.

"Very charming, indeed," replied Herbert, with singular calm; but he would have borne any suffering in Cecil's sight sooner than betray his love for Mildred.

Cecil was reassured: he did not estimate Herbert's developed powers; besides, the thought in itself seemed almost unworthy a second's doubt. "But," he continued, confidentially, "I am in a very humiliating position. Granting that my suit is accepted, not only by Mildred but by her parents, I am almost deterred from pushing it, when I think of my inability to make the smallest settlement. As a man of honour, Herbert, would you advise me to try my chance?"

"A good deal depends," replied his brother, in the low but distinct voice he had used throughout the interview, "on Miss Effingham's wishes, and your regard for her."

"I believe, without affectation, that she will probably accept me. I shall, naturally, be the happiest of men if she does."

"And you are secure of Sir Harry's consent?"

"By no means: though I think it attainable if I succeed, or have a prospect of success. That, my dear brother, rests a good deal with you—your support in this election."

They had reached Erlesmere House. A parcel lay on Herbert's study table: he took it up. A servant who was in the room said, "Mr. Dickson left that for you half-an-hour ago, sir: he said he would call again presently." Herbert opened it and looked at the contents. After a moment's thought, he put the paper it contained on one side. All he did was marked by an air of deliberation.

"Those old laurels are much improved by being layered," said Cecil, looking from the window.

"Very much. You consider, then, that your prospects in life entirely depend on your return for Holmvale?"

"Entirely," replied Cecil, with warmth.

"And your marriage with Miss Effingham?"

"Will be much facilitated, I should say almost secured, but for the impediments I have told you of; and which, as a man of honour, I feel to be serious."

"It is well: let us speak of other things."

There was in Herbert's manner a certain dignity which compelled respect from his brother. *Thinking* himself his superior, Cecil did not *feel* that he was. They discussed the weather, farming, their mutual friend Lord Clancahir, the last new novel, and a variety of other subjects uninteresting to both. Cecil adapted himself with care to what he conceived his brother's calibre. Herbert was reserved, and by no means fraternal in his manner. An hour passed slowly for both, even though luncheon helped to while its tedium. Neither was sorry when Mr. Dickson sent a message requesting an interview on business with his principal. Cecil withdrew and walked reflectively to Effingham, rather puzzled by his brother's reception of his confidence.

"Hard enough that I should fawn upon him," he said; "but to succeed, even more unpleasant hours than the last *are well spent*. Of course he will support me: like all little *minds*, he wishes to show off his power by this appearance of

deliberation; but I am sure of him, if I take him judiciously. By Jove! Tory as I profess to be, I can't see the justice of primogeniture in these days. However, Mildred's inheritance makes all right; and Herbert is sure not to marry, nor do anything else that can clash with me. My sphere is somewhat more extended than his, thank Heaven!—or will be, if I can once gain standing-ground. The next month or two is the seed-time of my life; I must be busy, and I shall reap a harvest worthy of my efforts."

"Who got up this requisition, Dickson?" Mr. Erle asked of his factor, when Cecil had gone.

"Why, sir, several of your tenants and some of the more moderate of the liberals in Holmvale. They do not like to give their votes to a nominee of Sir Harry Effingham."

"I will not stand, Dickson; for several reasons."

"Sir, I hope you will re-consider."

"There is no need: I have determined. My brother will stand."

"You choose to give your support to him, sir?"

"My vote, I will. My tenants may do as they choose. Now, about these estimates for the engine-house?"

Lady Effingham and Mildred drove, as they had proposed. Miss Effingham was silent and dreaming; her mother cogitative. The neighbouring doctor, who, as we have said, was a young physician of considerable talent, rode up a lane as they were passing. His horse plunged: the ponies caught the infection, and were rebellious; mutual greeting followed the episode.

"I have just come from poor Harden's deathbed," he said.

"Indeed! I did not know he was in imminent danger."

"It was sudden. Who is to be the new member?"

"I have heard no reliable report," replied Lady Effingham.

The doctor bowed and fell back. Lady Effingham drove extremely fast, as do all women of her stamp.

"I should hardly think Cecil will stand, after all," she remarked to Mildred. "He must give up the vision, and work for some more legitimate prize."

"I suppose so," said Miss Effingham, absently.

"He has no qualification: no money, even though there be no contest, to give his friends a dinner. It is absurd!" Mildred made no observation. "I hope you do not encourage any foolish attentions from him, Milly? I think you are not *enough on your guard*, dear child." Still no reply. "He

seems to me very self-sufficient and forward. I am extremely fond of him, poor fellow, however; but you should really be cautious, Mildred: you must not entangle yourself again, and you are sadly excitable. It was fortunate that last affair ended as well as it did, and that you have quite acknowledged that I was wise in all I said."

"Very wise," said Mildred, but indifferently, and as if for want of something to say.

"That is well. You know, my love, I only advise you for your good: do not have Cecil so much in your society: you are both young. It's as well to be cautious, before it becomes too late to retrace one's steps."

Curious, the apathy Mildred showed throughout this conversation, which in former times would have probably provoked some contradiction. Lady Effingham congratulated herself on her daughter's amenity, and thought of her as Lady Conington. Mildred had grown fitfully sullen—fitfully impassioned. Storms and calms came upon her without cause, and succeeded each other without apparent reason. Sometimes she listened without any apprehension of the meaning of the words addressed to her; sometimes they acted upon her as if they had power to sting her with pain, or entrance her with pleasure. The effect varied with the persons who addressed her. Altogether, with powers of perception in more active exercise than formerly, unnaturally intensified in some particulars, her powers of mental digestion seemed weakened almost to incapacity: she could not assimilate externals to her own life. The drawing-room was empty on their return; and, rather tired, Lady Effingham went to rest in her room until dinner-time. On the whole, she was pleased with Mildred's quiet reception of her injunctions. Miss Effingham passed into the octagon inner room, which had acquired a certain attraction for her. She thought of Cecil's story, which he had told her that morning. It was like her own. As she mused, it seemed to her that such histories—such interests—alone appealed to the deeper feelings of our hearts. What a shallow life had hers been heretofore! How little she had known of the inexpressible joys and sorrows which human existence contained! Did many know of their possible intensity? or were she and Cecil different from others? He understood her,—she could sympathize with him. Unacknowledged memories of Mr. Harley gave depth and pathos to these thoughts: he cast a shadow on her life, and darkened

her reveries, even when unremembered : she dared not think of him. The evening gloom came on apace. She sat thinking of Cecil and his love, and his quick sympathy with her. He came in and seated himself by her. His presence quickened her passing fantasies, till she could not discriminate each several thought. She did not speak. Cecil took her hand. It remained in his passively. He murmured some most eloquent words of passionate hope. Perhaps the eloquence was hacknied—the passion common-place,—for Cecil had recourse to memory, lacking at the moment inspiration ; but to Mildred, in her feverish mood, they were electric sparks. Scarcely conscious of what she did, quite forgetful of the past—of all existences exterior to that octagon room—she poured out her heart before Cecil. She flung herself on his sympathy—on his support. She told him of her wildest visions ; she confided to him her innermost thoughts,—thoughts hitherto shapeless, but which, in that hour of excitement, found expression. He was startled. Notwithstanding the *exalté* tone he had taken with her from the first, he was now a little astonished. He found that, by the magic he had scarce believed in, he had conjured up a wonderful and somewhat inconvenient spirit. He soothed her as he best could, and tried to bring her to realities. He wished to get some definite promise from her. Gradually her emotion calmed. She sat white and shivering in the fire-light : her eyes were dilated ; tearless, but glassy. Cecil drew her towards him. She was quite passive now. “Mildred, my beloved ! I knew all that you have told me : I knew all, or I would not so have loved you. We are one, by every tie. We have the same thoughts and hopes ; dearest ! how great will be our happiness. Mildred, you have never yet known happiness,—nor have I ; but now we grasp it—even now : is it not so ? Is it not wonderful that we should be so alike in our hopes and aspirations and sufferings ? We have found one another in this hard world. We will never part again. Is it not so, Mildred ?” She sat still and breathless. He took her hands in his : they were very cold.

“I think I should like to faint, Cecil—to faint—to die : it is so strange !”

“It will not be strange, Mildred. We shall feast our fill of happiness. Why do you shudder, my own ? Trust in me. Believe me.”

There was a long pause. The gong summoned them to

dress. With difficulty Cecil persuaded Mildred to move. She tottered as she rose. He supported her to her room: then, full of exultation and a thousand varying emotions, he sought his own. Why had her eyes that inward gazing look? Mildred did not appear that evening. Lady Effingham heard, while dressing, of her daughter's "indisposition." She looked in before going down-stairs, to see if she were suffering from any other cause than the headache she reported. Mildred lay on the sofa: she had turned from the light as her mother entered. She hastily replied to Lady Effingham's inquiries, that "her headache was not bad; but that she would rather be quiet."

"Let me feel your hand, dearest!"

It was now burning hot—the full stream leaping within each vein. "You were well out driving, dear child. Has anything happened since to give you this headache?"—Sir Harry, seeing through the open door of Miss Effingham's room that her mother was within, and that something was amiss, entered. "Hush! do not disturb her; she has a bad headache," whispered Lady Effingham, hastily meeting her husband in the doorway, so as to hinder his entrance. The clock struck the dinner-hour, and Sir Harry, a prey to punctuality, turned to go. "I fear Cecil has been agitating her," exclaimed Lady Effingham, as they went down-stairs together. "Dear Harry, do be firm; do not sanction his folly. Mildred's unhappiness will be the price; and, from a conversation I had with her this morning, I am convinced he is indifferent to her."

"Are you sure?" asked Sir Harry, with a searching look.

"Quite, quite sure," she repeated; fortified by the remembrance of her daughter's apathy in their morning drive.—They found Cecil in the drawing-room. He was gay that day, even beyond his wont; candid to Sir Harry; courteous, yet a little sarcastic, to Lady Effingham. The gentlemen sat long over their wine. Lady Effingham felt the evening dull, and wished, for several reasons, that Mildred were satisfactorily married.

CHAPTER L.

“ ————— prende un anel d'oro.
Ch'area il coperchio de la sepottura.”

“ Il se fit de la vie une plus mâle idée:
Sa douleur d'un seul trait ne l'avait pas vidée ;
Mais adorant de Dieu le sévère dessein,
Il sut la porter pleine et pure dans son sein ;
Et ne se hâtaut pas de la repandre toute,
Sa résignation l'épancha goutte à goutte,
Selon la circonstance et le besoin d'autrui,
Pour tout vivifier sur terre autour de lui.”—LAMARTINE.

HERBERT sat writing in his study. Rentals and several parchments lay on the table. He leant his head on his hand, as he looked through a closely-written statement of accounts. His dress was carelessly arranged, and he appeared haggard, as if he had been up all night. He looked ten years older in character that day than he had done two months ago ; ten years younger in physical frailty. His childish expression of suffering had returned ; yet an air of calm and noble endurance replaced the former look of impatient irritability. Suddenly the sash of the window was thrown up, and, putting aside the Venetian blind, Cecil vaulted into the room. “ So early, Cecil ! you have not breakfasted ? ”

“ I have come to breakfast with you. May it be soon, my dear fellow ? I am ravenous.”

“ I have had a cup of coffee ; but ring the bell, I will have breakfast got ready at once.”

“ I could not wait an hour, Bertie,” Cecil began, “ in asking for your final decision about my election. A great deal has occurred since I was here yesterday. There has been a crisis in my affairs,” he added, with a smile.

“ Indeed ! I hope a favourable one,” rejoined Herbert, with a constraint that drove him to very formal phrases.

“ Brothers should consult each other freely,” said Cecil, with *bonhomie*, “ and I know you are very safe. The fact is, that when I went home yesterday I had an explanation with Mildred.”

“ And then ? ” asked Herbert, in a harsh low voice.

“ It is all as I could most wish ; but Mildred is very unlike other people,” continued Cecil, doubtfully. “ She is so easily led, that one cannot be sure of her constancy for a week. She is very odd ; but I admire her excessively, and love her very much.”

weight or not. He is slightly Young England in his *penchants*: he calls the labourers "peasants," and encourages cricket. He is rather a brilliant *littérateur*, and has given society some clever historical sketches. He is pathetic about the Stuarts and Bourbons; but satire is his favourite weapon, ornamented, occasionally, by pointed and telling invective. He is handsomer than ever: sufficiently so to carry off the carelessness of dress he affects. He is in great request in society, though he is very silent in general; but whatever he says is repeated as a *bon-mot*, and by force of faith has the same agreeable effect on those who hear the saying as if it were. Mildred does not please in society: she is said to be "odd," and Cecil is rather pitied. Mr. Cameron, when first she came to London, espoused her cause; but, for some unexplained reason, he gave her up after awhile, and shrugs his shoulders when she is discussed. His helpmate seems the only cloud on Cecil's fortune: in all else he has been entirely successful. That his marriage with her has been the foundation of his subsequent rise in the world is become a trifling fact, compared with the many vexations she causes him. She is not to be trusted in society; sometimes she is uncivil to the very people with whom he wishes to stand well. She is indiscreet; and, even in his presence, commits the most embarrassing mistakes, which explanation but makes worse: and her reputation for talent increases the evil. In their rare *tête-à-têtes* she is for the most part sullen and bored: before others, she is often contemptuous and rude to him, making him ridiculous in the eyes of his associates, no matter how great the tact with which he bears her impertinences. She seldom appears to enjoy any circumstance; or if she does, it happens to be generally the especial cause of annoyance to him. If she is unhappy, she does not seek for consolation from society; therefore, in the eyes of the world, her unhappiness is inexcusable: Mr. Erle, who does, is pitied, and meets very general sympathy. These social impressions grow stronger every day; for Cecil and Mildred are always "somewhere," and, as they never retire to "nowhere," they have no chance of making new impressions. Years pass on, and one child, a boy named Arthur, is born—no others follow. He lives in the nursery, for his mother does not have him much with her, and Mr. Erle is generally either absent or *engaged*. He is a prematurely thoughtful boy, as is so often the case when parents are mutually dis-sympathetic. It is a

brilliant May-day. Mrs. Erle lies on a sofa: she is not physically weak or ailing, yet she has lain there for an hour, idly gazing at the seconds hand of the pendule: it conveys no message to her of the flight of time. Her writing-table, half moved away, is disordered; the crowd of semi-useful, semi-ornamental, appendages are pushed to one side, while a piece of tourmaline and a volume of Reichenbach's works occupy the foreground. On another table lie, in confusion, books and pamphlets, most of them purporting to treat of the "spirit world," or of magnetic and odyle forces, of somnambulism and clairvoyance, and the like psychological mysteries. A shut piano stands in a dusky corner: an idle paint-box, with shrivelled brushes, equally unheeded. Another hour passes. With vacant eye Mildred still gazes at the pendule on the mantel-piece. The door opens slowly, and a low childish voice asks leave to come in. Without any expression of interest, Mildred watches her child enter. He comes up to her, and says shyly in his broken childish language, "Nurse has sent me to ask you, mamma, if I may go out to-day."

"Yes, I suppose so. Why not?"

"She says I've had a cold, mamma; but I'm better now, and I want to go out—and I forget the rest."

"Tell nurse to do just as she thinks best. Now, run away, Arthur, I'm busy."

The boy goes to his nurse, who stands without; he is glad to escape, for his mother's presence weighs upon him, baby as he is. "Nana" takes him up and kisses him, and wraps him warmly, and carries him to the most sheltered corner of the adjacent square, where he toddles up and down with exultation. Mrs. Erle rises from the sofa, and, with a sigh of *ennui*, looks at a letter which lies on her writing-book. It is from Lady Effingham,—a fortnight old, but yet unanswered. Mildred takes a sheet of paper, and looks at it awhile vacantly; suddenly a gleam of intelligence lights up her pale countenance; she writes, and rapidly, such clever witty letters; and without an effort: sparkling with a natural beauty,—unstudied as the freaks of the wild rose or woodbine, when they fling their beauty over the dullest and most prosaic hedge; studded with fancies graceful as quaint,—epithets that leave no crevice for filling up in their adaptation, set in a flowing style that is rhythmical as poetry. There were no letters like Mildred's: she did nothing else so well. Of course people thought they

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were expressions of her sentiments: they had as little to do with her, in truth, as the perfumed and graceful clematis that hangs its sprays from a thunder-blasted tree, has to do with the seared dead heart within. In twenty minutes she lays her pen down: she has written a peculiarly brilliant letter. She throws herself again on the sofa; this time gazing, not on the pendule, but on a glimmering flower in the carpet. And now luncheon is announced; and she listlessly sits down, and, with a book before her—though she has not read all that long idle morning—she slowly gets through her solitary meal. Passing from the dining-room, she meets her husband on the stairs. His manner to her has an embarrassment quite foreign to his general ease; but it is affectedly careless withal. “Going out driving to-day, I suppose, Milly?”

“No, I am going to ride with the Lucys at five.”

“I shall not see you again to-day, unless I look in for half-an-hour at Lady Flintshire’s to-night: if I get away from the House early, I might.”

“I don’t think I shall go.”

“Just as you like. I hear Flintshire has returned. I must be off now.” He draws on his gloves and takes his hat. She goes up-stairs, and again flings herself on the sofa in her morning-room. She rings the bell and gives orders that she is to be denied to visitors until five o’clock; and then, from sheer vacancy, she falls into a dreamless stupor.

CHAPTER LII.

“Pourrais-je vivre en bas de ce fiel mêlé d’eau ?
 Pourrais-je du passé supporter le fardeau ?
 Suivre jour après jour sans rêver, sans attendre,
 Ce que chacun d’eux rêve et nul ne doit me rendre ?
 Et chaque soir, marchant sans but dans mon chemin,
 Me dire, ‘Rien ici, rien la-bas, rien demain ?’”—LAMARTINE.

LADY ADELAIDE ST. PIERRE has become Lady Adelaide Lucy. She is a very reasonable wife, and Mr. Lucy is an amiable and attentive friend, as well as husband. She nourishes still some enthusiasm for Mildred; but Mr. Lucy discourages it, it, and will not allow the slightest imitation of Mildred’s singularities in his wife. But he is good-hearted; and Lady Adelaide has represented Mildred’s solitariness so vividly, that he makes up riding parties sometimes to entice her

out. Mrs. Erle is fond of riding: she is a rash horse-woman, and sometimes she is fearless of all accident, but oftener she is timid and nervous; always careless, riding with slack bridle rapidly or slowly through the crowded thoroughfares, as the impulse guides her. She does not seem to prefer one scene to another: she is as *distract* in a crowd of acquaintances, as she might be in the grounds at Effingham. The Lucys are waiting for Mildred; she joins them without delay. Desultory as she is, she is always punctual: her desultoriness is the result of want of interest in life, not of temperament. She is peevishly impatient for impending events, however trivial. Her horse is of perfect symmetry; her groom admirably appointed: for Cecil is fastidious to a degree. Lord Charles St. Pierre is with the Lucys. Mildred has not seen him since the Strathmore time. He has been round the world since, and four years seem to him a century: he feels a kind of octogenarian interest in Mildred, and compassion for himself as a boy. We live so fast now that we grow to be a sort of Methuselahs, and have time to change so completely that we can look back on our former selves as on another species of animal. Mrs. Erle also remembered the little incident of his love-making on the edge of a cliff. For a second, the memory disturbed her vaguely; but the effect quickly wore off, and she rode on taciturnly. "Do you know Lady Flintshire?" Mr. Lucy asked, after awhile.

"No: is she in London?" very indifferently.

"Yes; they arrived last night from Liverpool."

"She is American?"

"Yes; but cosmopolitan in manner—certainly un-English, yet not the least Yankee. I was acquainted with her before they went abroad."

"I heard a great deal of her the spring they were married: Ady was very fond of her."

"It is best to admire her at a safe distance: a steady-going Englishman's wife could not very well be fond of her for long. But here is Clancahir: what an intolerable maniac he is, with his one idea about Ireland!"

Lord Clancahir joined them. Time had little changed his aspect. There was, perhaps, less roundness of features, but their straight and keenly cut outline was all the more characteristic; his eyes were slightly sunken, yet their glance was brighter than before: more searching, a little colder. Emotion was entirely foreign to his expression: there was no trace of

susceptibility ; power, will, energy, were alone apparent there. He turned and rode awhile by Mrs. Erle's side : he was profoundly interested by her ; she was fascinated, overawed by him, as by no other of her acquaintance. Mr. Lucy had fallen back to talk to his brother-in-law. Mildred was at a loss what to say, and yet afraid of silence with Lord Clancahir, who knew so much of her antecedents. "The Flintshires have returned from America," she said.

"I have seen her already. I knew her years ago, before her marriage, when I was travelling in Italy."

"You like her, then?"

"Why should that follow?"

"Or you would not have kept up a travelling acquaintance through four years' severance."

"It would be impossible to forget her, and therefore, perhaps, better not to know her."

"She is a bug-a-boo, this Lady Flintshire: every one seems to fear her; at least to predispose me against her. Is she a Mrs. Bloomer? a Margaret Ossoli?"

"You will, of course, make her acquaintance: you will be strongly impressed."

"*Epoi?*"

"You will probably admire her frantically."

"Why do you predict all this of me?"

"I think meeting Lady Flintshire will be an era in your life."

"A golden era?"

"Pinchbeck rather: burnished till it glitters dazzlingly."

"Pinchbeck will not dazzle me any more," said Mildred, with a smile,—one of *her* smiles.

"He is a wise mortal that can so boast. You will tell me your experiences a week hence, Mrs. Erle. I must leave you now for a business engagement."

Lord Charles St. Pierre replaced him by her side. "And you, too," she said, hastily—her manner was always abrupt—"What do you say of Lady Flintshire?"

"I only met her twice; but there is no one like her." He blushed a little with enthusiasm. "She has genius."

"Really!"

"I think you will appreciate her: so few do."

"And you found out all this in two meetings?"

"Time oftener veils character than reveals it to near connections," he said, apologetically.

"Ah! the third meeting might have cooled your admiration."

"You will of course know her; you will agree with me: you will be friends, companions."

"So you, too, prophesy?"

"In this instance," he replied, blushing again for his daring.

"In a month's time, you will tell me if I am right."

"Do you know you have been repeating Lord Clancahir's words almost verbatim? Shall we go faster? It is so hot, would it not be pleasant to rush through the upper air, even on a broomstick, to Blockula?" Lord Charles did not exactly know what to reply, but he thought Blockula sounded like a Norwegian name, and he said, with a clear conscience, that it would be delightful.



CHAPTER LIII.

"Dans les cendres du volcan que je croyais éteint, une fleur germe et s'épanouit soudain, parfumée des odeurs les plus suaves, parée des couleurs les plus charmantes."—C. DE BERNARD.

LADY FLINTSHIRE the younger had heard nearly as contradictory accounts of Mrs. Erle as Mildred had of her. It was the fate of both to be incomprehensible by most part of their associates. Folks love to create wonders: we all stretch our necks to catch a glimpse of the unknown. Mildred heard that Lady Flintshire was inscrutable. Lady Flintshire, in return, accepted the common report, that Mildred was a little mad, but positively a genius. Both were very much observed. "What will Mrs. Erle do next?" "What has Lady Flintshire done last?" were nearly as frequent questions as if these ladies had been meteorological. Curiosity was on tiptoe, at the *bal costumé* given by Lady Flintshire the elder, to see her daughter-in-law enter. Her dress was sure to be singular: on the whole, magnificence, with a dash of Orientalism, was expected. As for Mrs. Erle, it was impossible to prophesy: she was so "eccentric." Yet, as she entered, the groups she passed forgot her *renommée* while they looked at her. So sad, so pale, with her *abstrait* manner, she seemed to scatter silence round her. Her dress was grey—a gauzy cloud with just a tinge of rose,—pale as the last flush of day. A tremulous star rose above her forehead, whose reflected light

seemed to rest upon her. Her pallid features, and the cold tints of her dress, carried with them an atmosphere of starlight. "How odd!" "how beautiful!" were the alternate comments of the artistic and the unartistic, as Mildred passed on. Immediately after appeared Lady Flintshire, in a brilliant Watteau dress. "How very pretty!" whispered every one: "what a perfect costume!" Presently the Louis Quinze shepherdess and the impersonation of Evening were introduced to each other. "What can Lord Clancahir have meant?" wondered Mildred, as she looked at the girlish beauty, which could hardly be, she thought, a shrine for the character he had described. In the course of the evening, they met again. "You are tired," said Lady Flintshire, with so kindly a voice that Mildred was startled. She replied hurriedly. "I hope I shall not fail to make your acquaintance," continued Lady Flintshire. "I am fond of riding: we have already one taste in common. Adelaide says you quite tired her out to-day."

"I fear I rode too fast: it is pleasant sometimes to leave one's past behind, and be conscious of nothing but the present moment."

"But why hurry to meet the future?"

Mildred raised her eyes with inquiry. She perceived, spite of the shepherdess rouge, lines of suffering, not at first observed by her: there was a glow in the deep-set eyes that betrayed a fire within. But they were interrupted. Lord Flintshire came for his wife, and with him appeared Mr. Erle. There was a moment's general greeting. Cecil's eye rested with annoyance on Mildred's dress: it was almost gloomy beside the brilliant Dresden china colouring of Lady Flintshire's. "I conclude your dress is artistic, Mildred," he said, carelessly. "It is very unintelligible: I suppose you represent some Arctic spirit—the magnetic pole; eh? star, ice, and stillness all complete? It makes one shiver." Mrs. Erle did not seem to listen. He bit his lip and turned to Lady Flintshire; she took his arm. Mildred and Lord Flintshire followed: a good sort of man, but very un-ideal. They met Lady Adelaide near the door of the dance-room. "Going already! Why, 'tis not one o'clock!" she exclaimed.

"You know I never stay late: I'm very humdrum," said Lady Flintshire, with a smile.

"I think I shall go too," observed Lady Adelaide to Mildred, who came next in the crowd.

"Is it late?" she asked, absently.

"Not one o'clock yet," remarked Lord Flintshire; wondering how she had not heard his sister name the hour.

"Mildred and I keep early hours," observed Cecil to Lady Flintshire: "she cares little for society, and I have a good deal of work to do."

"Coralie never stays late at a ball," said Lord Flintshire to Mrs. Erle: "society bores her."

"Is that Lord Flintshire?" asked a very young man of Mr. Cameron, who leant against a doorway, rather absently watching Mrs. Erle.

"Who?" he replied.

"Is that Lord Flintshire in the velvet cloak?"

"That's Erle: Lord Flintshire follows."

"What! *the* Erle?"

"The Erle of railway chairmen, and rising members, and sucking financiers: Lord Waltham's Erle, in short."

"What a good-looking fellow he is!"

"Deuced clever fellow, too," said Sir Thomas Multon.

"His speech last night was the best there was by far: he has the ear of the House. He's making a fortune by railways, I hear; but he's always lucky."

"They say he was the best man of his day, both at Eton and Oxford," observed the youngling with reverence; for he had lately passed his great go.

"I think him the most promising man of his day in everything," said Sir Thomas, with the air of a prophet. He was one of Cecil's firm adherents and admirers.

"Ah!" the acolyte felt that he had acquired knowledge of society, and looked serious.

"Odd manner, Mrs. Erle's," remarked Lord Flintshire, reflectively, as he drove home with his wife.

"*Poveraccia!* she does not live."

"Eh! what do you mean?"

"She hibernates: she is frozen. Her husband was not wrong: all is ice and stillness, but without the star."

"Well, I don't half like her manner; and I think Charley's decidedly wrong about her beauty."

Mildred sat late—not reading, she seldom read—not doing anything, for consciousness is hardly thought; yet she was conscious that the dead chill waters of her life were stirred: by what, she hardly knew. She thought the ball had been a pleasant one; she had not been bored. Echoes of Lady Flintshire's voice lingered; memories of her liquid eyes

haunted her, and yet the definite impression was disappointment: she had expected some marked difference from others,—an eccentric manner, flashing brilliancy, or Siddons' grandeur; gorgeous dress, or rugged indifference to appearance: a tragic Muse-hood, or a Cleopatra presence. But disappointment and expectation were alike undefined. As Lady Flintshire had said, Mrs. Erle hybernated.

Meantime, Cecil paced to and fro his library; the cloud on his brow, the compression of his lips, had altered the character of his former beauty. No longer was there a look of aspiration,—that future gaze, lost as men stray further from their youth. He was weighted by the present: he trod down the past beneath his feet; he had no thought for the future. To act with reference to the to-come is rarer than we popularly think, and daily growing more so. The child-like faith of poets, the poetry of child-like faith, are scarce in these old world days; and it is one of the highest efforts of faith to merge the divisions of past, present, and future into one existence. But I may have a reader or two of Cecil Erle's calibre—a very scornful pooh-pooher: I had better keep to conventional description; or, better still, state the case in a brief and business-like way, to suit the bagman world who read novels between bargains. In the language of an electric telegraph, then, Mr. Erle speculated on a large scale: he had made a rapid fortune by railways; he had also distinguished himself in Parliament. He had started as a Young Englander, but had been attracted, by hopes of place and a "career," to adopt more orthodox Conservatism. A half promise of a good subaltern post lay on his table, from his friend Lord Waltham; a post of hard work, but an admirable opening for a political aspirant. A letter from Sir Harry Effingham reported Holm-vale safe. By its side was a request, awaiting an answer, that he would be the chairman of a newly projected railway company, concluding with an obsequious remark that his name would at once secure the success of the undertaking. We may sum up by saying, that in all he had attempted he had prospered. Was it wonderful that he should have been so weighted by the present!

CHAPTER LIV.

“Dieu donne des vocations différentes aux différentes natures d’esprit: les aptitudes sont les révélations de ces créations diverses, ces aptitudes refoulées et comprimées dans l’âme de ceux en qui elles se manifestent, produisent des suicides lents des facultés divines: les passions légitimes de l’esprit, si on leur refuse l’air, se pervertissent en passions coupables: les refoulements préparent les explosions de cœur.”
—LAMARTINE.

It is but a week since the ball at the Dowager Lady Flintshire’s, and already a close intercourse has sprung up between Mildred Erle and Coralie Flintshire. It is the custom to ridicule and doubt the existence of strong affection between women unconnected by relationship, or by the web of association with which time binds old companions. “Excellent wives,” “devoted mothers,” are for the most part absorbed in maternity. But there are some, with unsatisfied hearts, who have drunk the allotted cup poured out for them by our social rule, and who find the thirst of life yet unquenched by the draught. Useless is it to say it should be quenched: worse than useless to dam up the aspirations of those who are not content to be content: to say to the tide of love, hope, expectation, “thus far shalt thou come, and no farther. Venture not to overstep the usual: be satisfied to do as others. It is unreasonable, eccentric, and extremely bad taste, to desire more heart-room,—nay, irreligious, to be so passionately wishful for any good.” Oh, foolish lawgivers! how many perish morally in the conflict of their natures with your rules!

Listen to Lady Flintshire the elder. Does she not speak as you would, as she sat and judged her neighbours, with her daughter Catherine?

“How very odd Mrs. Erle is! I really wish Coralie would not allow herself to be taken up so violently: I don’t think Flintshire half likes it.”

“They offended Lady D’Eyncourt to a degree last night, by talking to each other the whole evening; even after the gentlemen joined us.”

“No wonder! It is so silly. And they go together to-day to Oakleigh until Monday, don’t they? A *partie carrée*, I suppose: two husbands and their wives.”

“At a Richmond villa, it is more likely to be two wives and their husbands. But Mr. Erle is not to go: he says he can’t be spared, even from his club.”

"I wish Flintshire was as distinguished as he is: Mr. Erle is quite an example; but Coralie's influence is somehow enervating."

"Not in Mildred Erle's case: Coralie has resuscitated her: exorcised the demon of sulkiness, at any rate."

"I hope seven others won't replace it. Sudden emotions are generally so mischievous. A woman should never look beyond her own circle for intimate friendships: I don't think Flintshire or Mr. Erle should allow it."

"Oh! it will not last long."

"But the mischief is done. A thousand fancied woes gain existence from being discussed, that are generally invented, lest one should be less pitiable than one's confidante. When I was married, I resolved to have no intimate friends: I am very thankful now that I did."

Lady Flintshire took up the newspaper, with a countenance that beamed with the pride of friendlessness. "Besides the ridicule of the thing," she broke forth again in a minute or two, "women meet, pour forth their grievances, then quarrel; their acquaintances laugh, and their husbands are befooled. My dear Catty, I could laugh, too, if it were not that Coralie is Flintshire's wife. I thought she had more sense, with all her foreignisms." Lady Flintshire the elder was partially right—that sort of narrow-minded people generally are. But the error, the absurdity, is that friendship should be so often profaned by egotism, by caprice, by jealousy. In our feverish desire for help, our love is too often wasted on an unworthy object, clothed for the time with an ideal colouring; yet, be the recipient ever so unworthy—be the return ever so inadequate, there are crises in many a woman's life, when thus to bestow her surplus love is a necessity: when even the imagined return of what she gives, infuses life into a dying existence, strengthens her for the future, comforts her for the past, and nerves her for the present duty. Let us judge not, that we be not judged. Even when the domestic duties are perfectly fulfilled, may there not yet remain a void? Is it not often so, though the truth may be hidden; and are not the noblest natures often the chief sufferers from the cramping prejudice which narrows our circle of affection? Let us never check any love, for all love grows with the use; nor fear that women will the less love their husbands and children because they also possess friends.

We will answer Lady Flintshire in detail:—"A woman

should not look beyond her own circle: " in other words, no matter though the "circle" be inadequate to her wants, she is to confine nature to its bounds: to cut her soul's wings, lest they bear her out of the stifling atmosphere of the "circle." She is to avoid all brotherly intercourse with her fellow pilgrims. And why? For fear that she perceive her position? Yet truth is not less truth because we veil it. But such friendships are like gossamer webs—they last no longer than the morning hour! Granted that it is often so; yet an hour—a minute, of face-to-face and heart-to-heart intercourse with one of our spiritual kindred, is a birth of, it may be, infinite good, an *Annus Domini*—or, it may be, a Deluge—from which dates our mental chronology. Sometimes apparent evils seem to have their source in these soul eras. If it be so, they were latent, and sapped life insidiously, till the truthfulness of the new intercourse forced them into light. It is common sophistry to date the existence of evils from their discovery, and to confuse their apparent with their ultimate cause. As well might we blame the sun that his rays generate corruption, as lay to the charge of friendship the mischiefs that sometimes seem to be born from it.

Lord Clancahir was right: Mildred's acquaintance with Coralie had been like a spark in a powder-magazine. Lady Flintshire was of a class hitherto unknown to Mrs. Erle. Exciting, and living on excitement, she broke through a hundred *convenances*, by English women of her rank deemed essential. She lived her own life; and her own life—But the reader shall see it for himself. Lord Flintshire's Richmond villa was just her atmosphere: the velvet turf, the conservatories, the air of *abandon* within and without, the *luxu* in everything, seemed necessary to her. Her sitting-room was the centre of the prevailing influence: no rigid votary of commonplace social restrictions could long have withstood the relaxation which became imperative there. Every line the eye rested on was undulant. Through the open *croisée* came the warm perfumed air of June, and kissed the flowers that stood in the shade within, and played with the dishevelled tresses of a fountain that stood amongst them. Books lay about—not Reviews, or judging-books of any class; poets of the present race—Alexander Smith, and Shelley, the ideal; and Keats, whose dreams seemed less dreamlike and more real in that sympathetic air. Some French and Italian books lay among them, with not unblistered pages: a tribute to the

sad truthfulness of their descriptions. There was a piano, but no vestiges of drawing tastes. How is it that women like Lady Flintshire seldom have the gift of sketching; or, if they have, it is gained with effort?

Eleven o'clock A.M.—Lord Flintshire and Mr. Cameron, the fourth in the *partie carrée*, have gone to Ascot. Coralie and Mildred are left alone for the day. Coralie half sits, half lies, on a sofa; Mildred nestles close beside her on a chair,—so low, that she leans her elbow on the edge of the sofa as she looks, in her old intense way, at her newly-found friend. Coralie strokes her golden-rayed hair lovingly, while they hold debate on life. Coralie hardly knows the burning trace her words are leaving on Mildred's heart: she has never before met one so intensely susceptible to the atmosphere in which she lived, and yet so new to its charm—an instrument that thrills in music to her slightest touch, and yet seems to have been hitherto so neglected. And she discerns the fitful gleams of genius in Mildred's nature, and loves and praises her, and comforts her in a manner pitifully new to the wounded sensitive plant. Mildred could not but expand to the kindly influence: her latent life is born under it, and the thick ice of her long winter parts asunder in the sunshine—parts asunder with a vehemence that leaves her weak and quivering, while her passionate tears fall like heavy spring-tide rains; and, one by one, the leaves of hope come sparsely forth, and the tender growth of long darkened thought-flowers. What a strange time seemed that Richmond visit to Mildred! What a new happiness to have a friend! Coralie's manner was so caressing, so tender. Mildred used to laugh at the like, but now what a luxury to hear the soft low voice repeating her name, and to feel the light hand resting in hers! as they sat in quietude among the roses,—a sultry quietude. There was no babble of their mutual histories; no egotistical detail of facts. Mildred's pale countenance and dreaming eyes revealed her suffering past and emotionless present; of life, as separate from events, they spoke: there was no domestic treason committed. How like Lady Flintshire, the elder, to suspect there would be! Well versed in poetic writ was Coralie: in the soul anatomy of Tennyson; the fiendish weird beauty of Edgar Poe; the colouring of Alexander Smith; the *Dantesque* reality of the unreal in Mrs. Browning's poetry, half hidden from grosser ken, as it is, by the white genius-fire. All gained beauty by her interpretation, as she applied

the vaticinal words to daily life. Daily life! and it was not an affair of eating roast mutton and paying morning visits; but of heroic deeds, and devotions as real as poets said, and unutterable joy and crowned suffering.

"Have you not believed," asked Coralie, "in these revelations? Surely you have, some time in the past: they cannot be new to you—to you!"

A trouble passed over Mildred's face; a wistful look. "I had forgotten—utterly; but once I used to grope among these things."

"Shall we not know further of them together? But you are pale, so pale!" and Coralie hastily stooped to watch the drooping head and the shadowy hair that seemed to have lost the light.

"Nothing!—the *Daturas*: the air is faint with their perfume."

"We will go to the drawing-room, and you shall lie on the sofa, and I will read to you."

"Coralie, not poetry!" and Mildred raised her eyes with a look of urgent entreaty: "at least——"

"I understand. See, there are none but reviews and biographies, and Flintshire books, in this room; except—ah! except, indeed, such a wild book—a book that would make you forget all sensation, by its monopoly of the brain."

"What?"

"'Prometheus.' His lips are touched with fire: not the slave-fire, that warms and cooks, however—he is volcanic, rather."

"Who is the author?"

"No one knows. The publisher is provokingly anonymous. I don't know any one among the people one meets likely to write such daring speculations. A wild hawk has got among our 'common domestic' poets, with an eye that stares the sun in the face: moreover, listen!"

And Mildred attended languidly; but presently a light broke in her eyes, and she sat upright, and listened rigidly and full of awe, to the *Donner-wort*. Then both were silent for a while, till Mildred spoke. "That sounds to me like a before-known truth; and yet one that was not in the inventory of my memory."

"Oh! that is often the case. The furniture of women's memory is generally—Item, a knowledge of six histories and sixty dates; several standard passages in standard poets; the

first book of 'Paradise Lost,' and the 'Waverley Novels.' But these thoughts were in you before you had a memory."

"You say you do not know the author?" said Mildred, wistfully.

"I wish I did. There is a wonderful tenderness in some of his passages—a kind of passion in his misery, that is in singular contrast with his proud affectation of scorn and self-sufficingness."

"Self-sufficing," repeated Mildred, dreamily, "and yet tender."

"I should say he was a philosopher, whose philosophy was sorely beset by besieging passion: you see the tears and rents in his mantle. Any way, his genius is wonderful; also his power of language, and his evident familiarity with science of every kind."

Mildred took the book hurriedly, and glanced at the title-page, at the introduction, the opening lines of the poem; then—"Will you read some more of it to me? I shall understand it better. Coralie, I seem to sit at your feet and receive the words you read as I might a revelation. How is it that you have so bound my faith to you, that I must believe what you choose?"

"Because faith is born of love, dearest! and I think, if you have loved before, it is long since. Now, lean your head on me, and we will receive the inspirations of this 'Prometheus' together." And so they sat and read, and blended minds and hearts together. Alas! it was but a handbreadth of sunshine to Mildred; brighter for the shadows at either hand.



CHAPTER LV.

"My place was dark; and, o'er a darker place,
A great hand held me that I could not see."

SIDNEY YENDYS.

"——— Ritorna a tua scienza
Che vuol, quanto la cosa è più perfetta,
Più senta 'l bene, e così la doglienza."—DANTE.

THE wheel of Time would not stay. The Richmond visit has become a dream of the Past. Mildred sits again in her morning room. Lady Flintshire is immensely *répandue*, and, of course, occupied in proportion by social necessities: she cannot devote much of her time to Mrs. Erle. The weight

of everydayness has fallen again on Mildred. Yet, undefined wishes—longings for some vague coming event—assert themselves. She lies on her sofa, desultory in appearance, as before, but with a yeasty brain. She found an outlet for her thoughts in writing. Very different her present words from her childish effusions: as comparable as Mount Hecla in reality might be to the panorama of its fires. To relieve the anguish of patience, she writes. She does not trust herself much with the past, nor venture to remove the seals with which her four years' marriage have sealed it. But a longing for the future consumes her,—a future that will allow action—a future of storms: any storm, even one of fire and hail, that will break the oppressive calm. A fortnight had passed since the Richmond time. She sat in her morning room; her husband came in; he looked haggard and worn, but she did not perceive the change. "I suppose you've heard the news, Milly; we were beat by eleven last night, and now I fancy there's nothing for it but resignation?"

"Who were beaten?"

"I think you hardly know if I am a Whig or a Conservative," said Cecil, bitterly; "but I came to see you, that you may not be puzzled by my non-appearance to-night at dinner. I am going down to Holmvale about the railway there, which won't do, after all; and, after that, I have to go over to Leipsic, to see the directors there of the 'Great Central.' I have told Anderson to send my letters, so you will have no trouble."

"When do you return?"

"I *must* be here in ten days; I *shall* be, probably, sooner: goodbye. I suppose you will go to the Flintshires' to-night. There will be a collection of *lions*: a bore, I should think; but Flintshire is an ass, and she a *lionne*. Do you remember the fable of their alliance? *Au revoir*." He was gone, and Mildred's thoughts rushed into their former current; the more wildly for the momentary stop.

Shortly after came Arthur, timidly, obedient to his nurse, yet unwilling to approach his mother. She raised herself, and sat upright to watch him as he came near: she took him on her lap, and looked at him long and tenderly. "Arthur, do you love me?"

"I like you now, mamma," he answered, with downcast eyes.

"It shall be always 'now.' Arthur, has nurse taught you to keep your word?"

He brightened up. "Always, mamma: gentlemen always do."

"Now say after me: 'I promise you, my mother, to love and protect you whatever happens.'"

He did so; then in a low voice, "May I stay with you to-day, mamma? I don't want to go out."

"No, my child, go out: I must be alone; but you will come to me before you go to bed this evening. God bless you, Arthur!"

He did not understand her passionate kiss; he was glad to return to his nurse: the impulse which prompted him to stay with his mother had passed, and Mildred felt that it was so. When he was gone, the world seemed very desolate: she flung herself back and moaned aloud. "I seem to have no air, no light, in this dark life: everywhere I touch prison walls in my groping. Would that I were still! Is there no shelter, no resting-place, except——" She shuddered "It must be morning soon: I feel as if a light were soon to come. I cannot see my way through life. Must I for ever be desolate, stranded, while the black waves come so often and drench me, and lift me powerless from my feet, till I know not which is earth and which heaven! This book of his—so sad, sad. And Coralie—she is so happy I cannot love her: 'twas a dream: but this book remains: she understand it! Why did she awake me with her kind eyes? why must we be divided, and yet have need of fellowship? An inexorable failure follows all our strugglings; yet I longed to love her—to love, folly! Is this his book? He must be changed; and yet I cannot mistake. But this bitter cry: has he also wept and felt the pain of life? the burning fire called life, that scorches my heart and brain."

CHAPTER LVI.

"Une femme dans un salon ressemble au soldat sur la brèche: l'abnégation est le premier de ses devoirs: quelle que soit sa souffrance, elle doit montrer à la douleur le front serein que présente le guerrier au danger, et tomber, s'il le faut, sur place, la mort dans le cœur, le sourire aux lèvres."—C. DE BERNARD.

LADY FLINTSHIRE had already assembled a society of celebrities. She had courted them abroad,—she liked to patronize *them* in England. But to patronize was an exigency of her position, rather than a wish of her own. Clever men were

clever in her house : there was for all an *abandon*, which allowed them to be themselves—not their public, perhaps, but their private selves. Spasmodic poets were merry ; humourists were sad, and votaries of the pathetic joked ; political economists quoted verses, and bishops were epigrammatic. Lady Flintshire, the elder, was a little disappointed that some supreme magnates of society had not admitted Coralie into their set : she was not quite sure that her daughter-in-law was not “odd.” With rather a puzzled anxious air she saw strangers, to her, look quite at home at Coralie’s *conversaziones*. She had some lingering prejudices, too, against “foreigners.” Artists were always mad, if they were gentlemen : ungentlemanlike, if sane. She sighed with relief if she met an old acquaintance with whom she could slightly, and with tender candour, condemn “dear Coralie’s oddities :” Sir James Cameron and his sister were invaluable, and Lady Invergarry liked going to these celebrity assemblages. She had a theory that talent should be supported, and so she came to do her part ; but she was very frightened if any talent approached her. The clique of *unilluminati* generally kept together. It was hard at any time to break a circle formed by Lady Flintshire, the elder : she held her auditors by a spell, while they listened to her proofs or disproofs of So-and-so’s decided indifference to his wife, or Such-and-such’s approaching ruin ; A.B.’s eccentricities, or C.D.’s common-placeness.

“Ah ! there is Mrs. Erle. How well she looks !”

“Can it be because Mr. Erle is off for ten days abroad ?” said Lady Catherine St. Pierre, maliciously, to Mr. Cameron.

“It is a mirage,” murmured Lord Clancahir, who was standing a little apart.

“Coralie and she are more rational now,” said Lady Flintshire, confidentially, to Mr. Lucy, who stood near.

“They do not haunt each other. Do you know who that is who is talking to her ?”

“To Lady Flintshire ?”

“Yes ; that very pale man—pale ! he might represent Monte Christo !”

Mrs. Erle and Lord Clancahir, who had joined her, had passed on to a less hot atmosphere in the next room.

“Why did you not go down to Holmvale, Mrs. Erle : you do not like London ?”

“I like it now.” Then, abruptly, “Why did you not wish me to know Lady Flintshire ?”

"Because calm is better than storm, for the mind."

"Storm is better than stagnation," she replied.

"Perhaps women cannot bear calm,—it becomes stagnation unless ruffled by emotion. Yet I was right about Lady Flintshire."

"She interpreted myself to myself," said Mildred, excited by some sudden impulse to speak less reservedly than she had done for years.

"We have many selves;—which has she revealed to you?"

"Can you help me?" she asked, looking up with eager wistfulness.

"We all can help each other. It is harder to be helped."

"She has taught me to be a thousand-fold happier than before, and ten thousand-fold more discontented," replied Mildred, with a forced smile.

"The discontent out-balances the happiness?"

"Of course," replied Mildred, bitterly. "Of course," she repeated: "happier for seeing Eden; miserable because its gates are shut."

"Why shut?"

"Ah! why, indeed! because a cold hand is on my shoulder to hinder me from opening them. Is it an angel or fiend that stops me?"

"Is yours a Mahometan Paradise, or an Annihilation Paradise, or——" he paused and changed his tone of jesting to one of deep earnestness—"that true Paradise, the gates of which are never shut to any who sue for entrance."

"Have you read the new poem, Lord Clancahir?"

"I never read; but I've looked through it."

"Don't you understand the hero's craving for some new existence—for a good leap from the world's edge into space, no matter where he alighted? Now, if the world were not round, I would make a plunge from the edge of it, 'glad to be hurled——'"

"Do not leap *down*."

"I shall do nothing: I always follow."

"What?"

"The owner of the cold hand; but now I feel I am entering on a new country: a new air is round me. I lose my head a little, and long for help, that I may struggle towards some—any crisis."

"Do you never fear? Do you not dread the crises of life?"

"I fear; but I long for one all the more."

"Do not be rash. I think you will fail to bear these storms you would raise: have you counted their cost?"

"I long to spend life and power freely: *à quoi bon* to hoard them till mould makes them worthless? Let me have one breath of cool air on my brow, and the storms may do their worst."

An indescribable proud beauty lit up Mildred's form. With steady eyes and dilated nostrils she seemed to dare fate. Gravely, sorrowfully, Lord Clancahir watched her: his features, regular to sternness, were unstirred by any emotion—only a shade of regret rested on them. They had stood a little apart from the stream of guests, that slowly passed to the inner room; a lamp hung near them, so as to cast its full light on Mildred: the thousand indefinable perfections of womanhood gave her a beauty which, in her girlhood, had not been developed, and during her unblessed wifehood had hitherto been clouded by discontent. Never had she looked more beautiful. Darker grew the shade on Lord Clancahir's face. "Do not dare fate; you look defiantly at the thunder clouds."

"*Che sarà sarà.* I do not fear them, only the sultry air in which I cannot breathe."

"Rather let your motto be *che sono sono.* Be firm. Should the storm come, let yourself not drift with it: look to your anchors."

There was a little stir at the doorway. A group entered the room and advanced towards Mildred. She turned her flushed eager countenance, her lighted eyes, her proud defiant nostril and curling lip towards the new-comers. Foremost was Lady Flintshire, leaning on Stephen Harley's arm. Pale, quivering, yet erect; as a statue struck by lightning might look undaunted towards the boltful heaven, she stood: she acknowledged Stephen's introduction with a most careless bow, and smiled, saying calmly, "Mr. Harley and I have met before."

"Really? why, Mr. Harley has but just returned from Norway!"

"I had the honour of Mrs. Erle's acquaintance before I went northward," replied Mr. Harley, coldly.

"Then you are old friends?" inquired Lady Flintshire, with surprise. "I intended you to be new ones: you have saved me trouble. Lord Clancahir, will you lend me your arm for a moment? I am looking for the Chevalier Seraaphael." Had not the crisis, so desired, come?

Mildred, excited by her preceding conversations with Lord Clancahir, was doubly impressionable. Then the suddenness of his coming, and he so changed ! His face, pale to lividness, unnaturally calm ; his quietness, so different from his former excitability ! The position became unendurable ; she stammered a wish to go to the next room. He offered his arm : silently they passed to the principal drawing-room. Mr. Harley seemed to attract attention : every one turned to look at him. Lady Flintshire beckoned to Mildred to take a vacant seat next herself. Stephen placed her in it ; then, bowing phlegmatically, he mixed with the crowd. "When did you know him ?" Coralie asked eagerly.

"He was Herbert's tutor."

"Don't you know he is the author of 'Prometheus ?'"

"I did not know."

"He only arrived in London yesterday : he is quite wonderful. Of course he has had fabulous adventures,—geniuses always have : they make them come somehow."

"Or invent them," suggested Mr. Cameron, who was near.

"He has been four years in the Arctic zone."

"Has he ?" said Mildred, with effort.

"Don't you think he looks frozen ?"

"Perhaps."

"But 'Prometheus' is not : what an eery book it is ! It might be the cry of Ugolino dying of famine ; and the worst famine—soul-hunger."

"How odd !" said Lady Flintshire the elder.

Mildred shivered ; she looked pale and haggard. "Would you see if my carriage is to be had, Mr. Cameron ?"

"You are not well," said Coralie, tenderly. "Will you come to my room, and lie down out of this glare ?"

"Thanks ; I will go home," said Mildred.

"Take my carriage, if your own has not come," said her friend, in a low voice. "Shall I come and see you to-morrow early ?"

"Yes, come : do come ! and early if you can."

Mr. Cameron had not returned : Lord Clancahir offered his arm. He was perfectly silent ; but very kind in his manner as he wrapped her cloak round her and made way to her carriage for her. He pressed her hand as he said "Good night," and added earnestly, "*Che sei sii.*"

CHAPTER LVII.

" ————— between

The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale master on the spar-strewn deck,
With anguished face and flying hair,
Grasping the rudder hard;
Still bent to maké some port, he knows not where;
Still standing for some impossible shore."—M. ARNOLD.

che sei sii!" the words rang in Mildred's ears: over and over she repeated them monotonously. During the long, dark night, a whirl of dreams and waking visions crossed her dilated eyes in the darkness. A thousand voices whistled together "*che sei sii*," till she shuddered as if she heard a distant hiss. And morning came, and every undistinguishable sound in the street formed itself into words. She was startled when her maid told her it was time to rise. She moved mechanically, and went to the breakfast-room. She found at a Supplement of the *Times*, and read the advertisements. There were no letters for her; a great many for Cecil.

She went up-stairs, and presently Arthur came, more buoyant now, more confident of love since yesterday; but, almost immediately, she sent him away. A servant brought a note: it was from Lady Flintshire. She could not come that day to her head ached, she wrote; and then Mildred put her head to hers, and knew that it was also aching violently: she had not thought of it before. A strange fear seized her—shapeless dread. She pressed her hands upon her forehead and with a strong effort tried to stay the mazy dance of thoughts in her brain. They seemed to break from her control, yet more wildly to whirl on, hurrying till they grew chaotic in their shapelessness. She tottered to the sofa, and gave a groan. Then fell on her a calm, and dreams of softest perfume, "silvery silken light." She awoke; the door opened; Mr. Harley was announced. By a hurried glance at the pendule, she saw that it was past one o'clock. It is curious how social habits wrap us round! Her first thought was of the unusualness of the hour for visiting, and then a kind of separate indifference to Mr. Harley's presence, while she remembered the appropriate common-places of welcome. He was so earnest that she grew reckless, and defiantly talked of Lady Flintshire's party, the opera, the last new novel. "The book is *Life*," said Stephen, "though it contradicts the

favourite theories of novel writers. There is no hero or heroine to work out some extra-superfine best patent manufactured moral."

"Have you been long in London?" asked Mildred hastily.

"I landed five days ago; and on the wharf I met an old acquaintance, who told me to buy a new coat, for I was famous, and several Lady Flintshires had been wishing for my arrival."

"You will go to Erlesmere?"

"I shall be very happy, if you are good enough to ask me."

Was this Stephen Harley, who talked in this quiet way, as if they had met in every ball-room during the season? His coldness frightened her; it was so unnatural. There was a pause; then, to break it, she said: "Bertie has done much to improve Erlesmere."

"He is much occupied by his Parliamentary duties, I suppose?"

"Bertie is not in Parliament."

"How false rumour is! I had heard that he was the 'coming man' of his party."

"Bertie!"

"In fact, I could not recognise my former pupil in the description. But I confess I have little insight into character, and any change is possible in four of these years. Yet Bertie—a red-tapist and railway king, is very incomprehensible."

There was some strange error. Mildred hurriedly said: "You mistake; Cecil is all this. Bertie never leaves Erlesmere."

A tinge of colour rose in Stephen's cheek: he started, but controlled himself with an effort that left him pulseless for a second. Then he calmly said: "And this house, and you—here—at Lady Flintshire's. She told me——"

"This house is Cecil's: I am his wife."

She rose and stood erect; she knew not why: she seemed possessed with sudden strength to face her destiny. With bowed head and rigid hand, grasping the arm of the chair, Stephen sat. He suffered not his anguish to appear: he did not look up. There was great pathos in his silent agony. The weight of his suffering crushed Mildred's momentary strength. As if a spring had given way in a machine wound to highest action, so she sank on a near sofa: pale, trembling, incapable of thought, yet longing to think, to recall, to understand, all this. And so they sat, till Mildred felt a

childish terror overcreep her, of the silence and the awful presence of Stephen's suffering. Tremulously she asked him to speak—to look up, for God's sake. And he did; but with so stern a look, so livid, so energetic in its grief, that she covered her face with her hands in terror. Slowly he rose—proud, unconsoling. He took his hat, and turned to leave the room; accusing her whose life he had blighted, whose mind he had so sorely shaken. Accusing! She sank back, wan, stricken by his eyes; yet with a look of pleading for some light, for some help and support. He turned to look at her ere he left the room. He wavered for a second; then, with ungovernable impulse, he went to her, and lifted her from the darkness into which she had nigh fallen.

* * * *

The flame leaped high in the socket.

* * * *

"And you were not false to me, Mildred? You were all I believed? Why—why had I so little faith?"

"Stephen, I can scarce regret the past, because of this present."

"Have you suffered as I have, Mildred? Thank God! you were spared my agony when I resolved to leave you."

"I do not remember—I will not remember—I will not think of anything but that you loved me after all."

"I rushed out into the wilderness. All beauty had left the earth: it was scorious—blasted."

"Stephen, forget the fearful past."

"You shudder: I will not tell you more."

"I know. I have read *Prometheus*."

"False, most false! In my pride I invented a new world, new beauty, new aspirations. They never satisfied me, those husks."

"I knew it: I felt the sorrow in your book. Your voice of triumph was a wail, and I knew it was yours, Stephen."

"Yet I did not write it: I was not sane. It seems to me now mere raving. Now——"

"How changed you are: how pale and worn!"

"And you loved me, Mildred?"

Suddenly she started. She rose, and stretched out her hands imploringly. "Not that. Do not recal——" She sank back again; then with sudden calm:—"Stephen, I think my memory is gone. Not gone; but sudden confusions

in it perplex me. I know I am Cecil Erle's wife, and yet you are here."

"It is true," said he, moodily. "I will go. It is past! And yet, would to God I had not come here!" he added, suddenly.

A trouble passed on her brow; then, almost smilingly, she said—but with what a smile!—"You used to teach me all things, Stephen: tell me why I am so light of heart. I cannot remember why I should be miserable, and yet——"

Again that expression of perplexed trouble. He looked at her with sudden fear. "Mildred! this has shaken you! Be calm! Calm—yes, calm is our best hope."

"Do not let that cloud settle on your brow again, Stephen: are we not happy?"

He paused: he could not speak for anguish; then, with harsh grating voice, "You forget, Mrs. Erle, you are Cecil's wife, and I am Stephen Harley." She looked at him wildly; then all colour left her countenance; she sat upright—rigid, as if expecting some sentence. "Forgive me, Mildred, I know not what I say. To return—to find you thus—to know that you might have been mine—might have raised me—informed me with all beauty and good. Oh that I had not made this sacrifice to the fiend called Duty! And you, too—to find you thus—Cecil's wife. Cecil's—— Mildred, pardon, pardon me! O God! it is too late—and to know what might have been!" He buried his face in his hands.

His great and bitter suffering seemed to calm Mildred's weakened mind. She rose and stood before him: very tenderly, and with sad quiet supplication, she said, "I suffer, too, Stephen; I think my mind is weakened by the anguish of these four years, and even now it tottered when I heard and saw you, and knew what might have been. But God be thanked that you are come again: we will help each other through this desolate world. You will heal my mind's distemper. We were very happy once: be my tutor again."

"You know not what you say," he muttered hoarsely.

"Not well; but still think of what we may look forward to."

"Do not wring my heart, Mildred: I must not see you more. Oh God! I cannot bear this suffering!"

"Now I begin to recollect—I know I am Cecil's wife: yet we can be friends. Say that we can."

"Cecil! Do you love Cecil very much, then? that we can be such happy friends!"

She put her hand to her head; then, with exhaustion—"I know not what to do: I cannot think. Help me, Stephen; this life is so heavy a weight to bear."

"Help you! yes, I will—I'll leave you—God help you!"

He nerved himself to rise to turn from her; but, too weak to consummate good by his own will, he looked back ere he went. Like a flower, cut from its stalk and withering on the arid ground, she lay—wan and languid; her form unanimated by any visible life; with eyes open, yet vacant, nerveless, soulless. He looked back; he uttered a cry of pain,—that pain which is wrung from us when, in the conflict of passion and reason, the will is overcome, and we feel ourselves bound hand and foot and cast into a prison,—a prison with walls of fire through which we may not pass; though from above fall sometimes rays of the cool light of heaven.

With a cry of pain he sprung to her side. "Dearest, live again! The past shall live again! I cannot, will not, leave you. I'll be your tutor, Mildred: yes, I'll school myself and be your tutor. Look at me: not so! not so! but with some light in your eyes."

He raised her in his arms; he tried to reanimate her, as he might one who had fainted, though she had not. Then came again the fitful light into her eyes. "I have been falling down—down into a black whirl, until you caught me and supported me. Mr. Harley, have you read Edgar Poe's story of the man who went down the Maelstrom?"

Imagine a lava flood instantly congealed; like that was Stephen's nature. Mildred's words, so carelessly spoken, and in the tone with which she would have uttered some trivial common-place, struck him with a sudden dread. He grew pale, as without reply he looked at her. "Why do you look so, Mr. Harley? Have I— Ah! it is true," she said, with a look of pained bewilderment: "I know I sometimes forget what to say; but you will always teach me." He moved slightly away. He was suddenly calm, yet the heavy tear-drops fell fast. Sorrow had removed all passion: for Stephen had a woman's nature. Genius always has its tenderness,—its power of suffering. "Do not weep, dear Stephen. Do you know, I used to spend hours in tears, until I think I have lost the power to weep. It is better so: is it not? I have a kind of half-existence: sometimes I suffer; but less often now than formerly. Now that you are here, the past seems a dream: only do not go again: the

light goes out if you do." Fast his tears dropped.—Little Arthur came into the room. With surprise, and the singular awe children seem to feel for some, he looked long at Stephen before he dared to pass him. Truly, it was a face and attitude that well might scare the young child, yet among the flowers: a face so full of anguish; an attitude of such dejection. Mildred started: half to herself, with a troubled look, she murmured, "Is all a dream?"

"Papa told nurse there were fish at the Zoological Gardens I might go and see. May I go, after dinner?"

"True: I forgot; it is most true—*che sono saro*."

"May I go, mamma?" for Mildred leant back and seemed to commune with herself.

Suddenly she took the child's hand. He shrunk back, frightened by her manner and the flash of her eyes. "You are right, my child; go: your father said you might."

"I think my dinner's ready, mamma; the bell has rung: here's George to tell you. Let me hold your hand and go in with you."

He dined at Mrs. Erle's luncheon. Was the Mrs. Erle who rose the shattered Mildred of five minutes since? It is strange how powerful is the force of social *convenance*. Cecil's wife invited Mr. Harley to join her at luncheon, almost as if they had not had a past. But Stephen hastily took his hat, and without farewell left her. For hours afterwards he wandered to and fro, in restless thoughts and reminiscence.

CHAPTER LVIII.

"Nulla speranza li conforta mai
Non che di posa ma di minor pena.

* * * * * chi son quelle

Genti che l'aer nero sì gastiga?"—DANTE.

"O God, I have been proud—so terribly."—McDONALD.

"A NOTE from Lady Flintshire, ma'am. Her ladyship is at the door, and waits for an answer, if you please."

It was four o'clock of the same day. The note ran—
"Come and drive with me: my headache is gone, and has left a head-void. Do you know the sensation? I want *some one to say everything to*; and you are the only one *who will not think I mean mischief*, if I talk it, in my present

humour. Besides, 'Prometheus' has set my thoughts fizzing. If you don't uncork them, beware of consequences. Come! come! come! as the ghosts say."

"Tell Lady Flintshire I'll go. I *must* go; the power of choice seems to be leaving me," she added in a murmured soliloquy, "I am so tired of willing."

"How weary you look! how—" exclaimed Lady Flintshire, suddenly interrupting herself. "Where shall we drive to? away from the 'crowded mart,' I think. So, now tell me all about Prometheus—Mr. Harley, commonly called. Where did you know him? why did you not tell me?"

"I did not know he had written it."

"I should have thought there could be but one Prometheus in the world: and there he is! Would it not be charming to take him with us? he would make us really taste this sheeny day. My new barouche is just fit for a poet to sit in: Prometheus would be ridiculous in a brougham. Mr. Harley, will you be kind enough to join us? We are going into the country somewhere—anywhere. Mrs. Erle, you are an old acquaintance; help me to gain his consent."

Bewildered, with sudden impulse, Mildred said—"Come."

There was a moment's hesitation, a quick glance at her wan, set countenance, and Stephen Harley was seated before her. While they drove fast through the suburbs of London, they passed Lord Clancahir, who was riding slowly in the same direction: he daily rode ten or twelve miles. He bowed with a very grave air, and Mildred felt that there was concern in his look, for her; though no one else could have perceived it. The incident stung her to conversation; and brilliant discussion, flashing thoughts and fancies, circulated between them with scarce any intermission. There was no gaiety; no light-heartedness: Lady Flintshire had too long lived on excitement ever to be gay; and the others!—But what revelations of beauty seemed to have been granted to Mildred! worship of it, love for it, still lighted her shattered mind. And Stephen? He was intoxicated by her talk; he seemed to walk hand-in-hand with her in a dream of unearthly happiness. The morning horror, the morning agitations, with their terrible alternations of hopes and fears, were past. Mildred was there,—glorious in intellect, in beauty. He revelled in the Then, utterly oblivious of life and its necessities. Returning, they again passed Lord Clancahir, who had followed a different road. Mr. Harley's face darkened: the

shadow, the Death which haunts all living, fell on his momentary elysium. Soon after, he thanked Lady Flintshire and asked to be set down at his club—a literary one, of course. Then the sun set, and twilight had set in greyly, as Mildred walked up the steps of her house. Lord Flintshire was at home: he always liked his wife's society when he could have it; so he waited for her in her boudoir. "Been driving in the country, Coralie? How did you like the barouche?"

"Oh, very much; you are a very good, dear husband. I took Mrs. Erle out, and we picked up Prometheus."

"Oh! that fellow! Erle's left town: I heard there was something amiss at Holmvale; and they say this row in France has done him mischief. I don't like him much, though his set cry him up so immensely. I can't conceive why you take her up so violently."

"My dear Flint, you never can conceive anything."

"Ah! Well, is it because Erle isn't here that she looked so remarkably well last night?"

"She has genius; and that is an excuse for some incomprehensibility," said Lady Flintshire. "She looked miserably ill when I took her out: ill is not the word;—and then afterwards she was quite inspired."

"Ah! My mother's been here twice, about Catherine's dress for the Queen's ball. She said she'd come again the last thing, so you'd better wait here for ten minutes: there—there's her carriage. I'll run down to the club, and see if there's any news."

"You'll hear more if you stay; but goodbye: find out all you can about Mr. Erle."

"At last I find you at home, Coralie!" exclaimed Lady Flintshire. "I want to consult you so much! Catherine is to be Anna Comnena, you know; do help me about her costume."

"Have you looked through 'Count Robert of Paris'?"

"Oh, yes; but it's so obscure. All the *moyen age* costumes are simple enough; but——"

"Where is Catherine?"

"At Madame Porquet's. She recommends, &c. &c., but I think, &c. &c. By-the-bye, what a very unpleasant rumour this is about Mr. Erle. Have you heard?"

"Flintshire said something about it; but I know no particulars."

"Nor do I; but it is said there are to be some questions asked in the House about his taking a bribe of shares in a railway, while he was sitting in committee upon its further extension somewhere. Lady Malham says that he has been availing himself of Government intelligence to speculate in the funds. You know her son is furiously Opposition: I hear he hopes to damage the Government."

"Mr. Erle had only a small place: the Government can sacrifice him and be none the worse. I'm very sorry for *her*."

"But he had just been offered one of the under-secretaryships, by Lord ——. It will be all in the *Times*."

"He may be able to clear himself."

"People never clear themselves of those kind of things: besides, the Government can't afford to support another black sheep: they lost so much by the F. C. affair. But here's Flintshire: what news, Flint?"

He looked annoyed. "'Tis a very bad business. There will be a damaging attack made on him in the House. Clancahir is doing all he can for him; but I'm afraid it's a bad case."

"An Irishman's help won't do much for him."

"It's odd—for a popular fellow, which he was—how few stand up for him. No one seems much astonished; and I heard Willoughby, who was so much with him, say to Leith, that he always thought Erle would come to a bad end. It seems he's never had a check in his luck till now."

"Well, I must go and pick up Catherine. I will take your advice, Coralie, about the white lace. *Au revoir*. By-the-bye, does Mrs. Erle know anything of all this? I wonder if she'll be at Leith House to-night: she generally goes there."

"I never saw her gayer than to-day."

"How odd! but after all, her husband's troubles *n'empêchent pas*, that she should be. Farewell."

"*Mon bon* Flintshire," said his wife, earnestly, when her mother-in-law had gone; "if Mrs. Erle is at Leith House to-night, will you be very kind to her, and take care of her?"

"Yes; but I never know what she mayn't say, she looks so mad."

"And tell Charlie about all this. I know he'll help you."

"Very well. Now *do* go and dress; you've only ten minutes."

CHAPTER LIX.

“ ————— suddenly
 Antonio stood before her, pale as she.
 With agony, with sorrow, and with pride,
 He lifted his wan eyes upon the bride,
 And said—‘Is this thy faith?’ and then, as one
 Whose sleeping face is stricken by the sun
 With light like a harsh voice——
 * * * * *

Ginevra saw her lover, and forbore
 To shriek or faint.”—SHELLEY.

“WHAT a scoundrel this Erle is!”

“A stupid fellow, too, to let himself be found out.”

“Of course he’ll resign his seat.”

“He’ll be cut universally.”

“Have you read the article in the *Evening News*? It talks of an impeachment.”

“Oh! that’s absurd: he’s too small for all that; but he deserves the utter ruin that has fallen on him.”

“I suppose he made his money by this kind of tricks. Really, it’s a disgrace to the House, and to Lord ——.”

“Of course he knew nothing of it. Hush, hush, my dear fellow! that’s his wife: I hope she didn’t hear us.”

“Good heavens! I hope not.”

“I don’t think she did. I wonder at her coming here to-night: how intensely proud she looks!”

“Proud, *fière*, and *fiera*—all three: poor woman, ’tis very sad. They say Erle’s broke, too, by this French affair: it has upset his railway schemes abroad.”

“Ah! who in the world is that odd fellow who’s gone up to Mrs. Erle?”

“Oh! he’s the new poet; the ‘Prometheus’ man.”

“Great stuff, isn’t it? I can’t understand a word of it.”

“Nor any one else; and that’s why it’s so popular among women. It might have been written by the Man-in-the-moon, and it may describe what goes on there; but nothing like what you and I are accustomed to.”

“What a clever thing that is of Malham’s—cut up the Government splendidly.”

“Well for Erle it was out before his business.”

“The *Times* will supply all needful castigation.”

“Poor fellow! But there’s la Flintshire: I must go and talk to her.”

Mildred had heard all; she understood all. Her mind was

clear; her thoughts sharp-edged: no bewilderment remained. Calmly she looked on Cecil's fall: she foresaw its consequences; she reviewed her position, as she might have studied a scene of some well-played drama; unreal, yet clearer than reality, as a landscape is seen in a camera-obscura. She returned the crowd-stare proudly. Her acquaintance scarcely ventured to talk trivialities to her; and what else could they talk? Lord Clancahir was not there. If he had, how different might her future have been! Lord Flintshire came up: he did not very well know what to say, so he asked Mrs. Erle to dance a quadrille. He was rather nervous, and looked often for inspiration towards his wife, who was near. Mildred's brain seemed distended—capable of larger perception than before: all her sensations gained intensity. The music had a fascination; the colouring, a brilliancy; the garlanded flowers and decorations, an intoxicating mirage-like beauty. Mr. Cameron, who was curious in psychological phenomena, came near to investigate her state, and to find out what had been so often questioned that evening—if she knew of her husband's disgrace. He had just addressed her, when Mr. Harley stood at her side—pale, with fierce gleaming eyes, and manner scarcely suited to evening dress, in its Quaker-like precision. "Come," he said, "your carriage is at the door: come——" She took his arm, with the eyes of one who dreams. They got through the crowd easily: every one made way for them. Mr. Harley put her into the carriage. It was still early, not much past eleven. Very bright the streets seemed to her as she drove home. Mr. Harley helped her to alight: he had arrived, a moment before, in a cab. "When can I speak to you, Mildred?"

"Now—now," she replied, with anxiety: she felt that this hurried action of her brain but heralded its powerlessness. They went to the drawing-room: a servant brought lights, and tea, and wine-and-water. There was a pause. Then slowly, with ringing clearness, Mildred asked—"What has Cecil done?"

"Disgraced his name, and ruined you."

"Is it so, indeed?"

It was fearful to see the fierceness in Stephen's eye as he came close to her and confronted her. "It is so," he repeated, with set teeth.

She looked at him, and quelled his anger by the calm of her expression. "Somehow, I seem to feel an end near."

she said, in the same clear, steady voice. "Before it comes, I want to understand the past: I would know why it has been so strange and dreamlike? why a weight pressed on me for so long, and now why I should awake to such realities? You here, and loving me, and Cecil disgraced!"

"Mildred, hear me, my beloved!—O God!—beloved indeed! I have sacrificed your life to my pride: I sacrificed it—but not for ever—not for ever. I loved you—I was mad with egotism—I thought you were not capable of loving me, as I felt was necessary to content me. Then Bertie's happiness: I hated him—I hated him;—and yet I would not stand between him and you—his life——"

"Bertie! did Bertie love me?"

"He love! He *thought* he did!—and I left you, a prey to—— God! I know—— Did I not suffer!"

"But why did you write that note? Why leave me so long—so long?—and then to know the truth! 'Tis strange," she said quietly, "how this last month of my life has tended to this consummation: it was frozen and sunless—and then Coralie awoke me from my torpor—and then you came: I see it all so clearly now. But what is this of Cecil?"

"Your husband—Cecil—your husband!—— Mildred!" he exclaimed, suddenly grasping her wrist, "You never loved this man: he was forced upon you: say so. You do not care that he is this public thief—this detected cheat—this disgraced——"

"I was desperate: he came; he drugged my mind by a thousand arts. I did not know you loved me. I could not, at times, endure the unsatisfied craving for excitement. I was half stupefied, half delirious, and he fed my delirium with his words—words, in truth—— And then I awoke to know that I did not love him. Even had there been no past, I could not—would not love one so false to right,—whose life was so void of all beauty and good! But I did not much care: my heart was dead. He left me to myself, thank God! and so I was not mad outright, but only dreaming; and every now and then a semi-waking—— I see it all so clearly now!"

Mr. Harley rose: he leant upon the mantel-piece, with drooping head; then, with broken voice—"You would have been true, had I been?"

"And now, Stephen," she continued, not heeding his question, "I feel that this calm of mine will not last long: some things I wished to tell you; some to hear, while it continued.

The night cometh. I felt all my strength go from me when I came in, in the afternoon; but I had yet will to wait for you in that crowd to-night. They talked of Cecil, and I heard of his disgrace."

Again anger lighted Mr. Harley's eyes; but he looked on Mildred's face, instinct with no present expression, but with one of troubled reminiscence. "It is more than I can bear," he murmured. "O God, be pitiful!"

She rose languidly. "It is over, Stephen. Go now: I must be alone: good night, dear Stephen."

"I'll never leave you," he murmured; "never—never again."

She put her thin hand on his shoulder,—its nerveless touch roused him: he broke into passionate, frantic expostulation, mad entreaty, that he might stay for ever. "Go, dear Stephen; I *must* be alone." How was it that he could not stay? What compelled him to leave her presence? to leave the sphere of her vacant eyes? A horror fell on him: he tottered from the room. "To-morrow," he muttered as he went.

"To-morrow," she repeated, shudderingly: "yes, to-morrow."

CHAPTER LX.

"Alas! thou fallest, and I am not free.
 Alas! alas! thou canst not let me forth!
 Alas! alas! the grave-clothes, not the grave!
 Alas! alas! the vaulted adamant,
 And dolour of inexorable things."—SYDNEY YENDYS.

HE passed through the hall as in a dream,—a dream in which one is conscious of some vague impending horror. He did not see the hat and gloves and travelling overcoat thrown hastily aside, nor the line of light where the library door was slightly ajar. He went out into the night—the maddening night—when we seem to hold fate in our grasp, and yet to be powerless,—when action appears so easy, and yet we cannot act; the fearful night to him of insane despair, of yet insaner hope. Quick the twilight hours passed, and day came; and by degrees Stephen's chaotic thoughts arranged themselves, and took a definite form. He seized on it, he held it fast, as a drowning man in his agony might grasp a suddenly perceived raft. He hurried to his hotel, to his room, and wrote.

he flung his whole soul into the pleading of that letter, taking no care for what he said; line on line he wrote—mad entreaty on entreaty: he could not stop; the next word might move her. If he paused, he felt he could not command himself;—on and on rushed his pen, with thicker and thicker blurred strokes. Poor passionate man! where was his proud self-sufficingness? At last he ceased: a chance sound from the outer world bewildered him; but, surging back, returned the thought. Then, starting, he hurried out into the street, and, by instinct rather than memory, made his way to where Mildred lived. A cab drove from the door. Was what he saw fancy—a hate-vision? A servant, who seemed to have been up all night, stood peering down the street: he looked with surprise at Stephen, who leant against the railing, haggard, yet seeming so full of energy. He was a Holm-vale man, well acquainted with Mr. Harley; yet until, with effort, Stephen spoke, he did not recognise him.

“Was your master in that cab?”

“Sir! Mr. Harley! I beg your pardon.”

“When did he arrive?”

“Late last night he came here, sir. Sir Thomas Multon was with him; and—oh, Mr. Harley——!”

“Will you beg Mrs. Erle’s maid to give this to her as soon as possible? she will be glad to have it, I dare say, immediately,” he added, with sudden dissembling and smooth manner, impossible long to maintain. He hurried from the house, from the street, and walked up and down the adjoining one, feeding on the Thought till it grew into a Hope; on the Hope till it became Realization.

Oh, fearful night! Reader, I dare not write of Mildred’s sufferings: I will not bare the secrets of her thoughts. Open the door of her room—she will not heed you: the flickering flame of the candle leaping in its socket gleams on her through the colourless morning light. She lies prostrate on the floor; her face is turned to the ground, while with one hand she seems to ward off some unseen enemy. What is there in her attitude which we cannot see? in her face that we dare not look upon? What is she warding off? Close the door! With earnest entreaty pray for her. O God, to release her from this agony of mind! O God, to strengthen her that falleth—*falleth* from among her fellows—*falleth* into the horrible *abysses* of insanity! God heard some prayer that night, and *stayed* her agony for awhile: an opiate vapour dropped on

her; she fell into a stupor. Oh fearful night! Cecil Erle sits in his study, and thinks: thinks till his strong brain whirls. Is there no way out of all this ruin? He seeks every niche in his prison walls for some door of escape: eagerly he calculates and reasons. He is clear-sighted—now even more than usually—and reviews his circumstances. The result is not satisfactory. He arranges papers, letters, accounts, with an angry brow; some he puts aside to burn; then, taking a pen, he prepares to write, but impatiently he stops. “Pooh! if I did try to clear myself, what use? If I live I’ll do better yet than that. I must live: I *will* live, to make — and — sorry they deserted me. Ah!” he smiled, “who knows what’s before me yet? But I may ruin all by this confounded duel. I, to give way to temper like a school-girl! I’d like to shoot that fellow, too. I’d be almost contented to give up the game here to know that he was silenced. Life in the backwoods,—’twould not be very cheering with Mildred as a companion. After all—whichever way this business with Mallham goes—the game’s up. One week more and I should have sighted the goal: one week! But I’ll still rise; I *will*! I’ll turn the tables. After all, ’tis a fine thing to defy luck: ’twas getting plethoric. Now my hands are free—I’ve nothing to lose—I’ll gain the more. Ah! Lord——, I’ll have you sue to me before I die.”

’Twas five o’clock: he rang the bell. “Bring coffee, Anderson; strong coffee, and a cigar or two.”

“Sir Thomas Multon is here, sir.”

“Show him in.”

“Sunshiny morning, Multon.”

Sir Thomas Multon was, perhaps, the only adherent who yet remained true to Cecil. He was a good-hearted, one-idea’d, credulous young fellow, with a great deal of good feeling. His manner was in contrast with Cecil’s: he was grave, but he tried to affect unconcern, for he was too young to venture to seem what he was. “Everything is arranged, Erle: are you ready?”

“Yes, quite: tell me the where, when, and how. Have we time for a cup of coffee to steady my hand? I don’t intend to let Mallham’s insolence go unpunished: it will stop the other yelpers. By-the-bye, I suppose other people have got this story against me?”

“Oh! you’ll knock the slander to pieces, of course. I hope it will be brought on in the House.”

"Yet it is not exactly a pleasure to be at any bar: I should prefer avoiding the notoriety. But I'll show up some of the fellows, if they dare to attack me."

"You have settled your affairs, and all that?"

"Yes; 'twas very simple."

"And Mrs. Erle?"

"Yes, yes," he said impatiently; "all right."

"Now, shall we start? I have a cab at the door."

They muffled themselves in their overcoats. Cecil hummed "*Partant pour la Syrie*," and smoothed his brow, smiling, as they passed into the brighter daylight of the street. "I haven't been out so early since last autumn, when I killed that stag in your forest, Multon: this is not such hard work anyway, to stalk Mallham." They drove down the vacant street in silence, while Anderson watched them with anxiety; and Mr. Harley came up and gave him the letter for Mildred. It lay on the hall-table till eight o'clock, and then Mrs. Erle's maid took it, with the accustomed cup of coffee, to her mistress. Mildred had not been to bed; she lay on the floor for long. When she rose, exhaustion overcame her: she could but totter to the sofa; then she sat upright, quite motionless,—looking into some other world; colourless, as if she had already passed through the dark gates which bound life. The maid had been with her from her youth: she knew that Mildred often seemed to be in a state of tranced existence; yet there was something appalling in Mrs. Erle's soullessness, while yet life remained. With an exclamation, she advanced and gave her mistress the letter. At first vacantly, then with slowly returning comprehension, Mildred read. As one in utter darkness, on whom a sudden blinding light falls, so it was with her; she longed to understand, and could not for a time. Bewilderedly she seemed to grope about for landmarks: for somewhat whereby to steer her course; and then, all at once, perceptions were born to her—perceptions that she greeted with a radiant smile:—a smile such as sorrowless angels might wear. 'Twas so new and strange an expression for any one to bear, that the good Benson was even more alarmed than by her mistress's extremest grief.

"You should try to get a little rest, ma'am: you have not been to bed: you will wear yourself out, indeed you will."

"I shall rest very well—soon."

"Dear heart, ma'am! you shouldn't talk that way."

"I could—— 'Tis a fine morning, is it not?"

"Couldn't be finer, ma'am."

"Get me some coffee, some breakfast: stay! when was this letter brought?"

"About an hour ago: I did not like to wake you."

"An hour! 'Tis near the time, then."

"Mr. Harley said he would call again for an answer, ma'am." Benson thought that Mr. Harley's note was connected with her master's early appointment; she guessed something terrible was in hand, but she interpreted Stephen's part wrongly. She added, "Mr. Harley was very anxious to see you, ma'am: I hope there is nothing amiss?"

"Nothing; nothing. Here is my answer for Mr. Harley." She folded a piece of paper into a note: she had written one word firmly, in the bold, clear handwriting peculiar to her—"Yes!"

"Take this, and tell Anderson to give it to him." In a second, Benson returned.

"Mr. Harley is waiting in your sitting-room, ma'am."

"Very well; tell him I'll come."

No bride could be more radiant than Mildred, as she crossed the threshold of her room: perhaps too calm and assured of mien for bridal hopes and fears. No doubt marred the serenity of her expression; one thought possessed her. There was no self; no emotion: it was the Juliet of five years since—the Juliet that *willed* to die. Now, she swept in stately grace down the corridor and to the drawing-room.

"Mildred, you are come: I thank you—mine, my own!"

"Let us go forth quickly, Stephen, into our new world—our sunshine. Come, I would leave these shadows."

There was an awful quiet in her manner, which checked in Mr. Harley the power to speak. And so they passed slowly down-stairs. What group of people struggled in the open doorway—struggled, as if supporting some weight, into the hall? What old familiar face came toward her and took her hand, and led her, suddenly submissive, with shattered will, to an inner room? What dreadfully staring eyes, and contorted form, haunted her, while vainly she tried to remember. Where is Mr. Harley? What grave, stern dismissal had forced him from her side, at the full blow of his passionate hopes?

CHAPTER LXI.

"Quivi sospiri, pianti, ed alti guai
Risonavan per l'aer senza stelle.

* * * orribile favelle,
Parole di dolore, accenti d'ira,
Voci alte e fioche, e suon di man con elle."—DANTE.

STEPHEN paced up and down the street; he dared not enter again that door—haunted as it was with the vision he had seen there. Mr. Erle had been severely wounded by Lord Mallham; symptoms of lock-jaw had appeared suddenly—a spasm had seized him just as he reached his home. It was with difficulty his companions had lifted him in, so rigid was his frame, drawn back by muscular contraction. A doctor in attendance gave them courage, or Sir Thomas Multon could scarcely have borne the sight. Lord Clancahir was pale but calm, and not deserted by the strong will which characterized him. His presence was a chance; he had come on urgent business connected with a money transaction, in which Cecil had, without leave, implicated his name. A word from Sir Thomas Multon explained all to him. He instantly devoted himself to the unhappy man. And to turn from Cecil's features, distorted by a spasmodic grin that left his gums and teeth bare—from his glazed eyes and livid agony—to look up and see Mildred, radiant, fronting this sight with calm beyond-seeing eyes! Which was most fearful? He drew her on one side, and she obeyed him. Stephen Harley rushed past the entering Horror, as one escaping for his life, and unconscious of aught else. Silent, motionless, Mildred sat in the inner room, and suffered Benson to use restoratives, and to murmur, through her frequent sobs, words of homely consolation; but there was no intelligence in her look, no change in her rigid attitude. Perhaps an hour had elapsed when Lord Clancahir entered. He took her hand; she looked at him mechanically. "I have sent by telegraph for Bertie; he can be here by two o'clock." No answer. Lord Clancahir walked anxiously up and down the room; then, with intentional abruptness, to break her trance, if it might be, he said, "Cecil is dying." Her lips moved, but there was no sound; a slight smile *tittered* across her features. Just then, Benson was called to

the door by a whispered message: "The doctor wishes to see you, my lord."

"Ask him to come here." He entered. Lord Clancahir drew him slightly aside—

"How is he?"

"He has temporary relief, but only for a short time: 'tis a fearful prospect for him. There is no hope, except that death may soon come."

"Will you say this to Mrs. Erle?"

The doctor started, but he comprehended a look from Lord Clancahir. "Mr. Erle must see her. He wishes it; and any refusal will shorten his temporary respite."

"Tell her so." Mildred listened passively as before.

"What is to be done?" whispered the doctor.

"A strong shock is the only chance, and she must see her husband."

"'Tis the only remedy, but a fearfully uncertain one: a brain fever is her best hope."

Lord Clancahir raised her from her chair. "I come," she murmured. Slowly they passed into the death-room. On a hastily prepared bed lay Cecil's distorted form, utterly pale, and with a look of intensest fear and anger mingled—a look enhanced by the expression of exhaustion and powerless anguish. A second physician, sent for by Sir Thomas Multon, stood by him. Cecil muttered something inaudibly. "Mrs. Erle," said the physician in attendance, advancing, and, deceived by Mildred's calm, which he thought natural, "It will hasten the next spasm, if Mr. Erle speaks." He was interrupted by Cecil: "Clancahir, you and she stay—the others not." He spoke with an effort that forced fresh drops of perspiration from his forehead. Lord Clancahir signed to the others to withdraw a little: he led Mildred to the bedside.

"Ah! so you were off with Har——: I wish him joy. But he won't have—you—are penniless." Again the slight infantine smile on her vacant face. "By God, you are! Why don't you go on your knees before me?" he shouted at the top of his voice, with a suddenly loosed tongue. Still she stood unmoved.

"For shame, Erle!" said Lord Clancahir, sternly.

"Ay, you helped her. I'm told you're the new secret: you cursed hypotrite!" he said, snapping his teeth together—*gnashing* at Lord Clancahir.

The postman's knock sounded at the moment. "My letters! get me my letters: damn you, be quick!"

Lord Clancahir beckoned to one of the doctors: he went out and returned with letters. "I'll read them to you, Erle: you can't move."

"Read out the signatures first."

"Lady Effingham," "Lord M——."

"Read!"

"'Tis painful."

"Pain: pooh! seasoning for the future. But I haven't time for his twaddle: go on."

"Your brother."

"Go on."

"Good God, Sir Harry has had a fit."

"Ah! at last: too late now. Go on."

"Erle, you are ——" Lord Clancahir checked himself with an effort: he continued—Mildred stirred not—"John Jobster, Agent, Gold Mining Company."

"Read."

"I have the honour to transmit you a Report just received per Australian mail: in consequence the shares have gone up twenty-seven per cent., being twenty-one advance since you purchased. By a fortunate accident, I did not sell out last week, as you desired."

"Electric telegraph message from Ascot:—Pactolus first, Martingale second, Terryalt third, for the Cup."

"Won thirty thousand there! Go on."

"From Jules Grandet."

"Read."

"Order being re-established, and the President declared, it is supposed that the Great Central will attain in the market its former popularity: shares are rising. It has been decided to offer you the chief direction."

"And I'm dying here—dying! And now the wheel has turned. I must live—I will live. Begone, you two! Mildred, you shan't see me die. Begone!" There was a murmur at the door—whispers, questions, and entreaties. Herbert came in, pale, horror-stricken; yet calm, because self-forgetful. He approached the bedside; he bent over his brother. A contraction of the muscles had seized Cecil; the prelude to a spasm. "So you, too, are come to see me dying! You, and Mildred, and the new secretary. Why don't Harley come, too?"

"Be silent," said Lord Clancahir.

Herbert turned away; his emotion grew scarcely controllable. His eye met Mildred's: fearful, horrible its expression. His first impulse was to flee, to hide from its glare; 'twas but an impulse. "For God's sake, Mildred!" He could not continue; he took her hand.

"Ha! you too! Ha! get paper and pencil," Cecil gasped, in the fore-felt agony of the overtaking convulsion. He scrawled some lines—'twas not writing, rather indication of words; they were quite illegible. With an intense effort, he raised himself enough to point with hatred to his wife and brother. Then the spasm seized him. Horrible!—the final and sudden snapping of the jaws, the recurvated spine, the head drawn back, while the arms were rigidly extended as on a cross. One long shriek from Mildred, and then incoherent cries and wild laughter, followed one on the other. She was carried away. Even Lord Clancahir's fortitude was shaken by the scene. Herbert knelt, pale and quivering, by the bedside. He did not know the worst: the hopeless future for Mildred, the remorse and despair of Stephen. A physician whispered to Lord Clancahir—"There will be no recovery from this spasm; why harrow yourself by such a scene? Mrs. Erle requires all your kindness. Do not stay here."

"'Twill kill his brother."

"Persuade him to go for the present:—this spasm may not be the last."

"See, he is less rigid: his muscles relax."

"In death," murmured the doctor, bending over the patient. A last shade of agony passed upon Cecil's face; then all was over.

"O God, be merciful to him!" burst from Herbert's lips.

"Come," said Lord Clancahir in a low voice, "you are wanted elsewhere."



CHAPTER LXII.

“ ————— one was bent half double,
 A dismayed heap, that hung o’er the last spark
 (Of a lamp slowly dying. As she blew
 The dull light redder, and the dry wick flew
 In crumbling sparkles all about the dark,
 I saw a light of horror in her eyes;
 A wild light on her flushed cheek; a wild white
 On her dry lips; an agony of surprise.”

OWEN MEREDITH.

THE servants were confusedly grouped in the doorways; great fear had fallen on the household. Very seldom does death interfere with social rules, but here was worse than death. Benson stood crying in the passage that led to Mrs. Erle's room; she had not courage to enter. While Lord Clancair stood irresolute, Herbert passed on; at that moment the doctor came to the open door, and beckoned for assistance. Herbert's love sustained him; how else could he have borne that sight? Mildred, his worshipped idol, whom he had known so glorious in genius and beauty, now crouched cowering in the farthest corner of the room, chattering, laughing, in incoherent commune—with—what! “Have you strength to assist me?” whispered the doctor. “She must be confined at once, or I cannot answer for the consequences.” She heard the whisper. “Ha!—Would you! Would you—Fools!” She sprang to the open window; she was already stepping on the sill. “Horror! He is there! burning—burning with white fire! and there are others with him, all burning. Ah!——” With a long shuddering moan she shrunk back, and seemed to hide from some object. The doctor motioned Herbert to advance. He grasped her hand; she burst into tears, and sobbed like a child. They laid her on her bed. When she awoke, she was confined by a strait-waistcoat. It was necessary to remove her to a private asylum, in the neighbourhood of Hampstead. Twice every day Herbert went there: not always could he see her; only in her calmer moods. Once he accompanied a lady in weeds—a lady of graceful presence, who was pale and grave when she left the asylum: she was ill for some days after, so that her doctor positively forbade any recurrence of the cause of her agitation. She did not reveal it to him—’twas a painful subject; but she obeyed his orders. Lord Clancair

rode down to Hampstead often, to inquire. One day he met Herbert there, so they returned together. "She grows calmer," said Mr. Erle, in answer to all inquiry.

"Is there any hope of recovery?"

"None; but she will soon leave Doctor G——'s for my home."

"And her mother?"

"Since Sir Harry's death, Lady Effingham has determined to go abroad for her health. Mildred cannot."

"What caused his fit? His death was very sudden."

"Some discovery of Cecil's——" Herbert's voice shook.

They rode in silence awhile; then Lord Clancahir asked, "And her son?"

"Shall be as my son; I have sent him, with his nurse, to Erlesmere."

"What has become of Harley?"

"I know not. It was him"—Herbert shuddered—"that she saw in the street that fearful moment. Tell me," he continued, with a sudden resolution to know the worst, "did she love Stephen?"

"Yes."

"Before her marriage?"

"Yes."

"And since?"

"Yes."

"'Twas true, then, what Cecil said?"

"Too true: but madness had been long sapping her brain."

"Oh! Mildred, would that I had known! would I had known! Always, always failure: and I so prayed for your welfare!"

"You have not failed, Erle: you are blessed by your own conduct. Persevere in it: you have acted nobly. Would you like active life? I might assist you."

"Not now: my name—— No, I will watch over her and Arthur. I do feel stronger in purpose, Clancahir. I *will* labour; I *will* still love on—not selfishly now. It is well so."



CHAPTER LXIII.

"La morte, vera amica
Ci dà la libertà.

Per la via degli affanni e delle pene
Spero, la Dio mercè, trovare il cielo."

MICHEL AGNOLO.

FOUR years have passed, and calm has replaced the storms of which I have written,—a calm full of sorrow, like November stillness. Herbert Erle lives in utter retirement: his life is grey, yet not gloomy; for the glow of a deeply loving heart casts subdued light in it, and here and there an unexpected sunbeam falls athwart the shadow. He is a good landlord, if not what is popularly called an active one. He seldom leaves a day unmarked by some kindness: he is beloved, as few men ever were, by all with whom he has to do; and this love heals his wounds. He still is fond of recording his thoughts in a diary: we will take a more closely written page than often occurred in it:—"This spring day has made me feel some of the old hopes beat in my veins,—the old wish to do; and yet I daily see more plainly, that obedience is the all-comprehending work. To be content with the pastures into which day by day we are led; to love the flowers by our path; and there is yet more—to be a 'man to brother men.' Truly, our idols must be discarded ere we can love the universal beauty; we must be content that our cedars fall round us ere we see the light behind—the sun-light, and the thousand beauties it reveals. I look back on my failures in what I had intended with satisfaction. I am content to have suffered—to suffer—for the gain of purer love thereby,—the love which is alone fulfilled, which alone is unhaunted by sense of limit or possible disappointment——"

A beautiful boy of eight knocked at his study door—a child of earnest eyes and quiet manner.

"Uncle, Lord Clancahir is coming: I see him walking across the park."

"So soon! We will go and meet him, Arthur."

"Mamma asked me to get her some water-lilies from the mere; may I go?"

"Yes, my boy: where is your mother?"

"She is in her room, singing: it was such a sorrowful song that I did not like to stay."

They met Lord Clancahir: little changed, except, perhaps,

for somewhat more of authority in his manner,—the natural outbirth of his felt superiority. “I am come till Monday, Erle, if you will have me: you offered me, you know, unlimited ‘lodging and entertainment,’ as we say in Ireland.”

“I am very glad you are come to-day, Clancahir; the old ‘moated grange’ is more sunshiny than usual.”

“Arthur is flourishing, I see.”

“He is just starting for the mere, to get some water-lily buds for his mother. Don’t stay for us, my boy; go and get them.” He bounded off, at his uncle’s bidding.

“How is his mother?” Lord Clancahir asked.

“She is always better in spring time,” Herbert replied, in a low voice: “she is happy with the wild flowers.”

“Have you heard of Father Ignatius, who is now in London, Erle?”

“Yes; I see his preaching mentioned in the papers.”

“He is Mr. Harley.”

“Stephen!”

“I met him walking with Dr. Smith, the parish-priest at Cahirmore.”

“Stephen! Father Ignatius!”

“Dr. Smith told me his history since—since we lost sight of him. He was quite broken down by remorse: a priest found him wandering about the asylum where——”

“Go on, I understand,” interrupted Mr. Erle, hurriedly.

“He took him to a first-rate scholar; one of the Oxford converts, I believe. Harley was ready for a faith that inflicts penance: he flung himself into the Roman Catholic system; he is now one of their cleverest men.”

“I can understand it all. Poor Stephen!”

“Father Ignatius now. You would hardly recognise him: he is calm and cold as ice; he would look unusually ill, only that he does not suggest the idea of illness at all. There is nothing of the man left—he is all priest.”

“Did he say anything to you of——”

“Nothing. Dr. Smith said that he was going immediately on an Asiatic mission.”

Herbert thought in silence for a little time; then—“I am glad he is not faith-less; I am glad the re-action is in this direction.”

“And yet ’tis scarce better to renounce than deify self: but we must not judge.”

“Peace be with him!” said Mr. Erle, solemnly.

A suite of rooms had been fitted up at Erlesmere for Mildred; but of late years she had been well enough to join Herbert in his daily life. Her manner was very quiet: she spoke slowly, but with touching childishness of idiom and thought. Her beauty was quite gone: it had owed much of its brilliancy, in youth, to expression; now, her large grey eyes gazed vacantly around, except when some reminiscence roused her to a momentary bewilderment. It was sad to see her talking to her boy as if he were some stranger child, whom it behoved her to amuse: she was ever tender and kind to him, but not motherly. He would bring her flowers—armfuls of wild flowers; she loved to play with them, to make chaplets of them, which she twisted in her hair: her hair, no longer her chief beauty, now short and slightly grey. She still loved music: she would sit for hours at the piano, wandering through chords; sometimes she would stumble on a fragment of some old tune, and suddenly stop and sigh and shudder. She did not often sing, but when she did the pathos of her voice was unendurable: at times she would suddenly change from the saddest wail to a merry air, with a dreamy laugh. She liked Lord Clancahir: she was calm when he was by, and very obedient to his least request; she came to meet him and Herbert as they went into the drawing-room. "I am very glad to welcome you," she said with dignity. "Have you brought me wild flowers?"

"Arthur is gone for some."

"Arthur is very kind. I told him to ask the stranger to come and dine."

"What stranger?" Herbert inquired, with perplexity.

"A gentleman who has been here three or four times. I think he is a clergyman: but I have nothing to do with clergymen, have I?"

"Did he come in?"

"Yes; he came and sat opposite to me: I was not frightened."

"Didn't you know him?"

"I have not a good memory, you know. I thought I knew him; but he went away before—before I could remember. He had a fiery outline: was not that odd?" Herbert looked sorrowfully at his companion.

"Here is Arthur with the lilies," said Lord Clancahir.

"And the stranger behind him: see!"

They both looked: the boy came in alone. Mildred stood.

gazing at the vacant space behind him: her features became rigid, all colour left her.

"Stephen!" With a cry—a cry that still haunts those who heard it—she stretched her arms towards the door, and then fell heavily to the ground. Medical advice and assistance were at hand: all that could be done was done; yet 'twas a fearful evening for Herbert. Lord Clancahir would not leave him, though he urgently begged him to go from that stricken house. Soon after dark, about ten o'clock, a servant brought Mr. Erle a note: he sat in the library with his friend. Through the silence came faintly at intervals laughter and cries, and a fearful medley of sound, from Mrs. Erle's apartments. He gave the note to Lord Clancahir. "He asks you to see him."

"Yes, I will—I must. Poor Stephen!"

He rang the bell. "Saddle Ruby for me at once."

"The gentleman is here, sir."

"Here! He said he would wait at the gate. Show him in, Richardson." A cloaked figure came in: the servant left the room. Father Ignatius stood before them; his head was stooped on his breast.

"Stephen!"

"Herbert, I am come to do you all the reparation in my power: I bid you believe and tremble, as I do."

"You owe me no reparation; you were——"

"Speak not of the past," interrupted the priest, shuddering; "my life must expiate it. I go whence I shall never return: ere I go, I bid you believe in God, the avenger."

"Stay! ere you go, Stephen——"

"Call me not Stephen. Stephen Harley is dead—dead," he clenched his teeth: "I am Ignatius, a servant of servants."

"Ere you go, tell me—Were you here before to-day?"

"I am just come from London; I return there immediately. I sail to-morrow." He turned to leave the room. A shriek came ringing through the house.

"Go—go quickly!" said Lord Clancahir. Another and another cry, from Mildred's room. The priest stopped.

"I listen," he said; "I hear. Thank God, who is yet merciful enough to punish." The sweat stood in drops on his forehead. There was a rushing sound along the oak hall; the door of the library was flung open; Mildred stood before them! The priest stirred not; his head was bowed on his breast, his hands were crossed. Herbert sank on a chair: the agony of the moment was too much to bear.

Mildred stood there—none dared approach her in that fixed attitude—more fearful than her past convulsions. With outstretched arms, and gleaming staring eyes, white-robed, pallid, she leant forward towards Stephen: his lips moved in prayer. She seemed to try to speak, and could not: then one long cry broke forth—one despairing, frenzied cry. In that wail she rendered up her spirit: she fell forward at Stephen's feet. Mildred Erle was dead! And Stephen!—his head bowed. his hands clasped, rigid, he stood. Those present looked for some vehement passion of grief: they hoped for it, to break the fearful silence that followed Mildred's agony. But Stephen made no sign: he went out silently into the night. May God be merciful to him in his great need!

Reader, the tale is told. 'Twas long ere Herbert Erle recovered the shock of Mildred's death; but "time brings healing on its wings," and his nephew, Arthur, creates a new interest for him in life. Daily he fulfils more and more the creed learnt from his Irish friend—Love the Beautiful—Wait in Hope—Trust in Completion.

THE END.









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